PROJECT HOPE:
"ANCHORED
IN HOPE"

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May, 2026

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ABSTRACT

PROJECT HOPE:
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by
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United Theological Seminary, 2026

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YWCA of Greater Cleveland leaders face burnout and struggle to maintain hope while working to eliminate racism, empower women, and end homelessness. This project hypothesized that if these leaders participate in seven weeks of servant leadership and spiritual enrichment workshops, they will be equipped with the resilience and strategies needed to better support their teams and serve vulnerable populations. To test this hypothesis, "Project Hope" was implemented for the Leadership Team. The methodology measured outcomes using pre- and post-session electronic surveys, written questionnaires, and professional interviews with executive team members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God Be the Glory for The Things He Has Done! I am so grateful to God for allowing me to serve and encourage God's people in every aspect of this Doctoral Journey. God has called me to do the Greater work, and I am so grateful that He used me in my Project to minister to the hearts of God's people in the local church and in Marketplace Ministry.

Rev. Dr. Robin E. Hedgeman, Senior Pastor of Bethany Christian Church, thanks for being my pastor and mentor and taking the time to walk with me on this Doctoral journey. Grateful and appreciative to all the members of Bethany Christian Church for being my cheerleaders along the way.

I have immense gratitude to Rev. Vikki Pruitte, Senior Pastor of Lee Heights Community Church, for the opportunity to preach, share my spiritual gifts with the congregation, and provide spiritual leadership as the Minister of Music. The Worship Ensemble has been a blessing to me, praying for me and praying over my dissertation work.

Rev. Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Senior Pastor of Inner Healing Ministries, my Dad in the Ministry, words cannot express the love that you have poured into me, preparing me for leadership in baptisms, preaching, and allowing my leadership over the worship experience every 3rd Sunday to be amazing.

Rev. Dr. Wanda Coleman, I cannot thank you enough for listening to my heart, reviewing and editing my work, and sharing your experience with me for encouragement. We journeyed together at Ashland for our MDiv., but I am so grateful for our reconnection as sisters and friends in the ministry.

Sherri Horton-Brandon, Executive Director, CEO and President, Rising Well, formerly known as Front Steps Housing and Services, I praise God for your faithful support of my vision to serve God's people. Thanks for our conversations throughout my doctoral journey. I know there will be more to come, but I appreciated your professional excellence in believing in me and my ministry in working with the least of these. I am grateful for the tremendous help provided by my professional associates during this endeavor to become a doctor of the Church, graciously sharing your professional wisdom and expertise. Thank you for your time, your support, and your prayers. You made me and my project better with your invested time in listening to and pouring into me.

Grateful to Dr. Martina Moore and Rev. Brian Moore for allowing me to serve in a season working for Moore Counseling and Mediation Services, Inc. Professionally I was supported in my educational journey at John Carroll University and was professionally equipped and trained to counsel and support people struggling in Chemical Dependency and Drug Addiction. I am forever grateful for that work experience.

I appreciate the staff at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. I am grateful to Helen Forbes, CEO and President of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, for saying "yes" to my Doctoral Project. Heartfelt appreciation to Denise Coats, VP of HR Department, thank you for allowing me the grace to support me in the opportunity to use my gifts of teaching and encouragement for the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater

Cleveland. I cannot thank you enough for your support of my Doctoral Final Project, "Project Hope". Special Shout-Out to Candace M. Price, HR Generalist for journeying with me as my videographer, producer, and administrative organizer to meet the needs of the Fantastic Voyage for my Final Project at United Theology Seminary. My appreciation to Dr. Adriennie Hatten for professionally encouraging me with wisdom to go through the process of the IRB. God sent you to provide clarity to me right on time. Thank you for hearing the voice of God and for speaking life into me at a time when I needed it most. Special thanks to Kenya Smith Ewart for your administrative support in helping me in my doctoral project. Donna Bolton, thanks for being a living epistle of someone who really lives her testimony out loud and shared your recovery journey with me.

Cerena Mangum, Edna J. West-McFadden, Lucky Caswell-Harris, and Tonya Murray and the Ministry Team of Speak Life Ministries, I am in awe of how God used you all at every need in my doctoral journey. I love you all. Thank you, thank you.

Donna Asnani, thank you for the supervision lessons and your friendship—meeting you at New Life Community was a meaningful experience. Dr. Yvonne Pointer, thanks for being my supportive prayer partner, and reigniting my vision for hope in the Marketplace. Teresa Sanders, my first supervisor, thank you for hiring me at the YWCA and encouraging me as a Prayer Warrior and for being the professional God has called me to be in this season. Marianne Conway, (Mim), thanks for praying and supporting the Doctoral program of the senior "Dream on Kids", I'm eternally grateful to you for your faithful support.

To the faculty mentors of the Builders and Bridgers: Transformational Approaches to Pastoral Leadership, Prophetic Preaching, and Spiritual Formation

doctoral cohort, Dr. Donald Hilliard, Jr., and Dr. Christopher Michael Jones, the value You both have added to my life and I am grateful to God that He ordered my steps to be a part of this co-hort. From my very first doctoral intensive, the immersive mid-semester trip to London, to every focus group training and receiving encouraging text message sent or phone call made, thank you. I am grateful for gaining new fathers and brothers in the ministry. Thank you for providing me with your scholarly expertise and insightful guidance.

Prayerfully, I am grateful for each of my fellow colleagues in the Builders and Bridgers doctoral cohort. I praise God for every bracelet that God allowed me to create and to pray for each one of you. Especially, Pastor Chaena Hollist, my peer associate, who was my prayer warrior and friend. I praise God for conversations and spirit-filled encounters throughout our entire Doctoral program. I am forever changed by our relationship, and I praise God for a new sister and friend.

Danita Harris, founder "It's Your Time to Shine", thanks to all of the Board Members and all of my Shine Sisters and I appreciate you all for being my sisters in the Lord. God bless all of the women in the Women's Ministries I have served in over the past 20 years.

Thanks to my Transportation Ministry to Dayton every semester, Desmond Wilson, Cerena Mangum, Ray Marone, Jerry Williams, and DreAn Gray for making sure that I arrived safely at United Theological Seminary, thank you, thank you, thank you! I have heartfelt love and appreciation for Michele Edwards, Chanell Edwards, and Charise Grimes for believing in me, and you all were the first to recognize me as a doctor, before I saw it in myself.

What a blessing to have Cherie Wilson supportive of my rest and spiritual encouragement for the REST Ministry as I wrote papers and needed spaces for contemplation and writing. Thanks for all the pillows for impartations to others in ministry across the globe.

Thanks to my mother, Emma Jean Stewart, who proudly calls me her daughter and pastor. Momma, I love you for taking care of me all of my life and for believing in me when I was doubting myself. God has blessed me with Frances Doggett, my mother-in-love, and the LaPoint family, Eric, Jennifer, and Christopher who have prayed and encouraged me on my spiritual journey. Thank you to my family!

Thank You to the entire Williams, Middlebrooks, Lewis Family, Scruggs /Doggett Family, for your prayers and steadfast love shown to me in my Doctoral Journey. To my brother, John Middlebrooks, Jr., thank you for being my brother and my friend. Thanks to Denita Conway, and for your support of my doctoral journey. To all of my sisters, I LOVE you ALL. Debbie, Norine, Ava, Sheila, Francine, Wanda, Diana, Tansha, thanks for your calls, prayers, love, and financial support. I love ALL of my family and would not have been able to complete this assignment without your love for me.

Finally, my husband, Rev. Jeff, I praise God for 42 years of marriage and for your spirit for supporting me to walk out the journey that God has called me to do. I am grateful that it is part of the "I Do" plan that God has ordained for my life. I LOVE YOU, and so grateful to walk out this season in my life with faithful support.

I GIVE GOD ALL OF THE GLORY FOR THIS FINAL PROJECT!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in loving memory to my Cloud of Witnesses in Glory: Aunt Joyce L. Williams, Aunt Rose Robinson, my first pastor, the late Rev. Clarence Hicks, Pastor. Emeritus, Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church, and my cousin, the late Bishop Ronald L. Ferebee, and Tom and Grace Uhle, the founders of New Life Community, a homeless shelter on the eastside of Cleveland. My life has been forever changed for you teaching me and entrusting me with leadership over homeless people at New Life Community. I owe a debt to Mother Willie Mae Wright, who taught and trained me in ministry before I had formal seminary training

I dedicate this dissertation work to all of the churches that I have served in, Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Providence Baptist Church, Grace Church, Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lakeshore Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ), Inner Healing Ministries, and Lee Heights Community Church. Grateful to all of the Prayer Warriors and Intercessors that have supported Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett in my doctoral journey at United Theological Seminary.

I dedicate this work to the unhoused individuals I have supported during the past thirty years, as well as to the nonprofit staff who encourage self-sufficiency among people experiencing homelessness. I dedicate this work to those who minister in the local church and God has called you to Marketplace Ministry and beyond to make an impact for the kingdom.

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ABBREVIATIONS

YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
NHWC	Norma Herr Women's Center
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

—Hebrews 6:19 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

The doctoral research journey was life-changing for me and my professional career of listening, learning, teaching, and educating those that serve the least of these. The synergetic process was important to me for this project, but more importantly developed professional clarity to me for my life mission in the world to magnify God's name. This work explored the use of spiritual enrichment and encouragement to the Leadership Team in the Marketplace of the YWCA in Greater Cleveland. It examined how leaders have to pursue their passion, discover their "Y", and protect their purpose to effectively serve these populations of people.

As a professional in ministry, blending spiritual enrichment with practical support helped staff make a positive impact in the marketplace. The methodologies used throughout this Final Project allowed me an opportunity to teach, encourage, edify, and share the journey with 15 professionals who share their personal trials in the workplace and trusted the process that this was more than just a Final Project, but a touch point for them to experience what God was speaking into their lives.

Project Hope hypothesized that educational workshops on servant leadership will equip administration and staff with practical knowledge and strategies to better support their teams. This final project was successfully implemented to foster an environment in which the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland could experience spiritual growth and professional development. The voluntary Empowerment Sessions

were designed to provide a structured platform where members of the YWCA Leadership team can share insights and engage in reflective discussions with fellow leaders. The research completed toward informing the hypothesis was divided into four major categories: biblical foundation research, historical foundation research, theological foundation research, and interdisciplinary foundation research.

Ministry Focus details the beginnings of Project Hope's development. Developing the professional supportive spiritual enrichment need for the context of ministry that God led me to provide leadership at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. Chapter one shares the synergy of my ministry journey and the needs of the project context, which resulted in the identification of the project's focus and thrust.

The Biblical Foundation study is a strong foundation with an emphasis on the exegetical study of New Testament scripture Matthew 25:31-46, featuring: The Final Judgement with Structure of the Last Judgement Passage; an Overview of Matthew 25:31-46, an Overview of the Gospel of Matthew; Three Forms of Analysis (Contextual, Formal, and Detailed Analysis); a section on How This Passage Informs the Project, and the Importance of What the Scripture means for this current context of ministry. The study climaxes with the scripture and shares the problem statement: Is Matthew 25 strong support for the biblical foundation of this study?

The Historical study chapter reviews the life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height. When first given the assignment of the Historical Foundation paper, Height's name was already significant to my personal journey in ministry and my advocacy for women's rights. Writing this study allowed me to study, reflect, and learn more about this unsung African American woman in American history. Dr. Height is recognized as one

of the preeminent social and Civil Rights activists of her time, particularly in the struggle for equality, social justice, and human rights for all people. As the sole woman among powerful, charismatic men — and as someone whose personal ambition was always secondary to her passion for her cause — she received little mainstream recognition until the later years of her life. In preparing for the Faith Partnerships, it is significant to note that Dr. Height advocated for the needs of other African American people and maintained her focus on building up the family through socialization and special events to foster unity.

The Theological foundation is where the conversation of pursuing their purpose and their passion. The Theological Foundation chapter goal is to analyze a theological theme of human restoration, healing, and holistic care that can take place when homeless, oppressed women are nurtured, educated, encouraged, and edified. When the women are supported, they can independently care for themselves and not repeat the cycle of recidivism of returning to residing in homeless shelters. During my research, I will provide workshops inclusive of Black Theology and Liberation Theology that will allow former guests to engage in creative expression and forge community networks, lessening their dependence on shelter resources. This will be an opportunity to develop the tools in the toolbox so that when crises arise, former guests will have positive alternatives to the shelter. Project Hope was intentional in discovering spiritual enrichment for your why in the marketplace and grappling with challenging pursuits for when you want to give up or quit. During this session, it was important to discuss what keeps you stable in the marketplace and what anchors you want to stay with during difficult moments in working with the least of these.

The interdisciplinary chapter focused on CBT and the importance of socialization and commitment to positive activities, personal growth, and development. Positive activities are crucial for former guests dealing with mental health issues using CBT. Chapter Five provided an opportunity to blend psychology and spiritual enrichment in the marketplace ministry, addressing excessive burnout and compassion fatigue. This module offered an opportunity to teach and share discussions on stress management and spiritual encouragement for balance in the work and home as professional leaders in the workplace. The interdisciplinary chapter focuses on CBT and the importance of socialization and commitment to positive activities, personal growth, and development. Positive activities and encouraging workshops are instrumental to the least of these. The context of NHWC's ministry requires training in working in a trauma-informed environment to meet and support the mental health needs of the staff.

Chapter Six Project Hope was implemented to the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Clevland. The 7-week Empowerment sessions were designed to promote spiritual growth in the Marketplace among the leadership team. The methodologies used were focused on spiritual formation with meditation and prayer, historical education, addressing challenging questions related to the current needs of the staff growth and professional development. Executive Leadership participated in interviews, and pre- and post-questionnaires were used to support the hypothesis that Empowerment Training sessions are needed for staff.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

As I prepared to write my ministry focus, it became clear that my context for engaging in ministry will most likely include the practice of professional skills and spiritual disciplines learned in both the marketplace and the local church. More specifically, my context—the YWCA of Greater Cleveland—offers me the unique opportunity to share key Christian principles that complement the services I provide as a shelter care professional, administrator, social advocate, and minister of the gospel.

My goal in analyzing these specific contexts and how I support their varying needs begins with reflecting on the importance of sharing the gospel with "the least of these" — even through unconventional means. This Ministry Focus chapter allowed me to reflect more deeply on such practices while also organizing local church and mission groups that have historically partnered with the corporate vision of the Norma Herr Women's Center. Building our partnerships with these diverse agencies will only strengthen the spiritual support provided to women who are placed in affordable permanent housing like the NHWC.

I have worked with homeless women and children for over thirty years as a full-time administrator, health care professional, counselor, social advocate, and spiritual-wellness coach. Working with homeless women and children, I discovered that this

segment of the population is most in need of affordable housing, employment, supportive wrap-around services, and both emotional and psychological care, as they navigate toward self-sufficiency and social stabilization in affordable housing.

In addition to meeting their basic needs, I have discovered that homeless women and children are also in need of pastoral care. Women who are faced with a complexity of crises need soul care, and they are acutely dependent on the services provided at the Norma Herr Women's Center. Agencies like the NHWC are necessary institutions, uniquely equipped to support a severely underserved segment of the population that is routinely overlooked by the public and the media.

In this chapter, my objective is to share the hypothesis that educational workshops on servant leadership will equip administration and staff with practical knowledge and strategies to better support their teams. This final project was successfully implemented to foster an environment in which the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland could experience spiritual growth and professional development. The voluntary Empowerment Sessions were designed to provide a structured platform where members of the YWCA Leadership team can share insights and engage in reflective discussions with fellow leaders.

The current mission of the YWCA has evolved from the original statement, published in 1850, into the powerful phrase it remains today: "Peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people."[1] Women who need shelter and support are still in pursuit of peace, justice, freedom, and dignity. From its inception, the YWCA has worked tirelessly

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[1] YWCA of Greater Cleveland, "Mission Statement," Accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.ywcaofcleveland.org. The Mission statement for the YWCA is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote these values for all people.

to empower such women. This work of empowerment has included confronting social practices and institutions that harbor systemic racism, wherever it exists, and by any means necessary. In a survey taken recently at NHWC following the pandemic, 40% of homeless women expressed a need for the return of churches, spiritual leaders, and pastors.[2] The survey responses were at least partially influenced by the shelter's decision to restrict volunteers from coming inside the building from March 2020 through December 2022. Before those dates, staff members led numerous groups by conducting weekly bible studies, church programs, food drop-offs, and clothing distribution. Many of these social services were severely limited during the pandemic by the decisions made at NHWC.

As I continue sharing my ministry of encouragement and hope with the leadership team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, I am led to believe that practicing spiritual disciplines can only enhance the process of spiritual formation for the women at NHWC. Part of empowerment is engaging in these practices will involve intentional reflection on certain wellness and soul-care initiatives, which go a long way in meeting the social and spiritual needs of the homeless women and children at NHWC. As I mentioned before, many of the women at NHWC are long-term residents. They are supported by a community of professional staff, shelter advocates, and spiritual enrichment.

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[2] YWCA of Greater Cleveland, *YWCA Mission Statement – Updated Brochure 2025* (Cleveland, OH: YWCA of Greater Cleveland, 2025).

Problem Statement

In my new role as the Culture Coach at NHWC, I oversee twenty-five Advocate Staff and provide supportive care to ensure workplace stability, promote wellness, and build resilience. In addition to addressing staff needs, I conduct monthly worship services focused on motivational spiritual groups for women. Each day, I attend to the basic concerns of twenty-five Advocate Staff members and 236 women at Norma Herr Women's Center at two different locations. While working on my doctoral degree, I have referred to my specific project as Project Hope because, truthfully, regardless of the women's race or faith, they all seek hope — hope to make it and thrive during these challenging times. The women find support along their journey through attending AA meetings for addiction and maintaining sobriety. From our experience at the shelter, when former guests face crises, they often turn to churches or missionary organizations to sustain their self-sufficiency and keep their housing.

A persistent issue at Norma Herr Women's Center is the high percentage of women who return to the shelter because they need more supportive spiritual care and comprehensive services to help them stay stable in public housing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, churches and mission organizations in the Greater Cleveland Metro Area lost contact with the shelter. Project Hope will develop the confidence of the Leadership Team to develop the core values of eliminating racism, empowering women, and seek to end homelessness,[3] should seize this moment to make a positive impact on the women coming into the shelter at NHWC. Participation in spiritual practices that foster spiritual growth is optional but encouraged. I launched a six-week Empowerment Session, to

[3] YWCA of Greater Cleveland, *YWCA Mission Statement.*

enrich the Leadership team with practical workshops to support them in working with difficult guests and how to troubleshoot concerns that come up daily in a trauma-informed environment. I understood this would be challenging, as many women come from different faith backgrounds—or none at all.

Despite the religious and cultural diversity, I have seen at NHWC, many of the women still privately ask for my prayer support. Yet, just as often, someone will make a public prayer request or offer a prayer themselves. Homeless women do try to address their health and housing concerns, which are ongoing for them. Based on my experience offering spiritual counseling to these women, I believe that practicing spiritual disciplines can help them grow spiritually at NHWC and meet their own spiritual needs.

As I facilitate workshops on Wellness, it is my role to teach and support the professional staff and to create an atmosphere that encourages staff members to want to continue working at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. This project hypothesized that if the YWCA Leadership provides administration and staff with useful knowledge and methodologies, then they will be better equipped to support their teams.

Ministry Journey

My journey in ministry has consistently included music ministry as a way to help me heal from past hurts and to seek healing for my passion of helping other hurting women in the community, marketplace, and all around the world. My spiritual journey began when I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart at age eight at Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church, under the pastorate of Rev. William Jamerson. My passion for learning God's word started early through Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Bible Enrichment classes, which were vital for my spiritual growth. Growing up in a

local family church inspired me to use my spiritual gifts in music, worship, and the word of God. At age 16, God revealed to me, my gift of exhortation in the preaching ministry. Wanting to learn more about my gift of exhortation, I was immediately rebuked and redirected in the Baptist Church that women were not called to be pastors.

Since women in ministry were neither modeled nor embraced at that time, God led me to another Baptist church, where I again faced rejection because of my calling to preach the gospel. Although they appreciated my gift of exhortation in worship and my leadership in Praise and Worship each week, the pastor was not supportive of my calling to preach and/or teach the gospel. I then sought a spiritual director, Rev. Patricia Foote, who taught me about spiritual formation. I had to learn to have an encounter with Jesus, and He would teach me, guide me, and show me a more excellent way. Pastor Foote introduced me to the teachings of Apostle John Eckhardt, where I learned more about the spirit of rejection and began to discover that God wanted to use me. In the book *Destroying the Spirit of Rejection*, particularly in Chapter 10, which provides specific instructions for dealing with the Spirit of Rejection,[4] God was preparing my heart then because He knew that the calling on my life was to minister and encourage the brokenhearted.

It was at that church that I experienced the love of God, and I was encouraged to further my education and attend Ashland Theological Seminary, where I then faced a lot of rejection from the senior pastor because he did not want to engage with me in the process of higher education. I tried to stay there because my husband and I were both

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[4] John Eckhardt, *Destroying the Spirit of Rejection: Receive Love and Acceptance and Find Healing* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010), 163-178

leaders in that church, and it was very difficult to be at a church that could not embrace me in the preaching ministry. The best thing that happened to me, in attending that church, occurred while I was in a bible study where, during the Lenten season, I was introduced to Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here for?*[5] It was during that 40-day wilderness experience that I began to study and pursue the purpose and plan that God has planned for my life. The book has a handbook and journal, and I began the process of learning my own personal mission statement and what is the purpose and plan for my life. Having this book in my hand has rekindled the power of purpose that comes from within. There is a chapter that speaks to my heart on The Heart of Worship[6] that reminds me that what he has called me back to the heart of worship. In that local church God used the loss of my daughter, Imani Christian, to give birth to a Women's Ministry for hurting women and still reaches the lives of women in the church today.

Eventually, I left that congregation and entered a season of discernment about where God would call me to serve. It was truly a wilderness season because I did not want to remain a member of that local church— although my husband, also a minister, was beginning to thrive in his preaching ministry, and we both belonged to the same congregation. But God was preparing me, even in the wilderness that my ministry had to be in faith community that embraced me and my spiritual gifts to serve God's people.

During my season of discernment that lasted three to five years, I was guided by a spiritual director, Pastor Patricia Foote, who poured into me and encouraged me to keep

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[5] Rick Warren, "Day 3: What Drives Your Life?," in *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 27.

[6] Warren, "Day 10: The Heart of Worship," in *Purpose Driven Lif*e, 77.

reading the scriptures and focusing on God's holy word. The scriptures support this in Isaiah 6:8: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?[7] Then I said, here am I, send me." There is a hymn titled "Here I Am," written by Daniel L. Schutte. The lyrics declare: "Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart."[8] It was in that small chapel, I remember, saying "Yes, Lord, to the call to preach and spread the gospel in worship, word, and deed."

I listened for God's call and stayed obedient to the holy spirit hearing God's voice led me to Bethany Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, where the Reverend Dr. Robin E. Hedgeman serves as senior pastor. I am very thankful to have joined this congregation during my second year of seminary at Ashland Theological Seminary. I was welcomed to grow in my higher education and pursue a Master of Divinity degree while embracing my gifts to teach, preach, pray, and play instruments for God's glory. Rev. Dr. Robin Hedgeman was very embracing of my spiritual gifts and was one that endorsed my gift of exhortation in the preaching ministry. During my wilderness season, God allowed me to minister to homeless people who were not part of the local church but needed to know the love of Jesus. This season was crucial in helping me recognize more of my spiritual gifts and walk worthy of the calling on my life. It began at Family Promise of Greater Cleveland, formerly known as New Life Community, where I served for 33 years. Family Promise allowed me a professional and spiritual platform to encourage, edify and pour into the lives of homeless families in the Cleveland area. At the same time while working

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[8] Daniel L. Schutte, "Here I Am, Lord," in African American Heritage Hymnal, vol. 2 (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001), 507.

for New Life Community, I entered into Search and Call in the Christian Church of Ohio. I had applied as the Senior Pastor for Lake Shore Christian Church, in Euclid, OH. I was installed as the Senior Pastor, in September 2011. I reduced my hours at the shelter, but I still maintained my position part-time and pastored Lake Shore Christian Church for close to ten years.

As the Senior Pastor of Lake Shore Christian Church[9], God called me to serve over an older mixed interracial congregation in search of diversity and engagement in the word of God. It was truly a blessing to preach on a weekly basis, administer to the hearts of the leadership and congregation. No more rejection about my call to preach, because I was preaching weekly, and providing spiritual leadership to the entire congregation, and surrounding churches in the Euclid area in addition working at the shelter.

After serving seven years in the local church, the church was struggling to financially take care upkeep of the building and the care of the pastor. During my final two years at Lake Shore Christian Church, I experienced multiple pay cuts that impacted my personal journey. It was with the payroll deductions that I then had to engage in a Bi-Vocational Pastor. I was then employed full-time at Front Steps Housing and Services (formerly Transitional Housing, Inc), where Sherri Horton-Brandon, Executive Director at the time.

I spent four years as Director of Employment Services, assisting homeless, unemployed women in finding housing and jobs to support their transition to self-sufficiency. Developed positive employee relationships in the community with

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[9] Lake Shore Christian Church, located on 28010 Lakeshore Blvd., Euclid, Disciples of Christ. a congregation that welcomes diversity in the membership.

workplace management and advisor to encourage women that were transitioning back into work world. My ministry path ordered my steps to work for Moore Counseling Mediation Services where I was employed as a Drug and Chemical Dependency Counselor. I worked as a licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor, leading women's groups addressing drug addiction and chemical dependency and developing treatment plans. I was assigned Aftercare for women that were successful in their drug treatment, but they were preparing to come back in the community.

Restoration is the key ingredient to working with women who have had issues of life, whether they were incarcerated, homeless, marginalized, and or the least of these. God has blessed me to journey with women who have needed someone to walk with them along the way. God has allowed me opportunities to pray for and pour into staff, mentors, volunteers, and professional executive directors over the years.

It was in the role of a Bi-Vocational pastor, where God reminded me of when I graduated and was ordained. The foundational scripture is Luke 4:18, “The Spirt of the Lord up on me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

It was in the local church, where I was able to minister the gospel in the worship and the preached word. Post pandemic I have served at Inner Healing Ministries, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Benjamin Frankin, Senior Pastor, who has encouraged me to share my gifts in preaching, teaching and the word of God. It was there I was encouraged to monthly have an opportunity to lead worship and prophetically play my instruments to the glory of God. In the aftermath of the Pandemic, I was invited to minister at Lee Heights Community Church, where Rev. Vikki Pruitte Sorrells, is the Senior Pastor, as

the Minister of Music, where I was embraced in sharing my gifts to preach and teach and encourage the congregation in worship and the word of God. In this congregation, I was given the assignment to work on wellness in the congregation, where I provided fresh fruits and vegetables to the congregation on a month basis, providing community outreach to provide healthy vegetables to seniors in the congregation.

It was clearer to me, that God was calling to do more than the local church. It was at the homeless shelter, prisons, and the marketplace that I had engaged in encounters with Jesus that were life changing for the people that I served. I knew leaving the local church full-time that I needed additional income with benefits. I applied for a position at the YWCA, had four interviews and was overqualified for the position. It was during my prayer time, that I let my request be made known unto God. In a matter of weeks, there was a position of Housing Stability Specialist that was created to case manage and engage with the women when they transitioned into the community and obtained permanent housing.

After serving thirty-three years at Family Promise of Greater Cleveland, as a full-time Community Director, I was not sure if I wanted to go back to work at another shelter. There are so many changes that happened with the reduction of income at Lake Shore Christian Church, I was faced with the challenge of reduction of income and then becoming a bi-vocational pastor. As someone committed to lifelong learning, completing my doctoral education was a significant goal for me. After four interviews, God allowed an opportunity for me a position at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

It was during the COVID-19 pandemic that all volunteers, including church groups and social service agencies, were barred from entering the building. As a Housing

Stability Specialist, I was out in the field at the time, performing site visits at the homes of former guests who had been permanently housed. During the pandemic, I could not enter individual housing, but God allowed it to be a creative season for me. I developed Encouragement Sessions with a weekly spiritual devotional and adult coloring and counseling sessions for women with trauma-informed care. I also developed an internal support stream of donors who would continue their in-kind donations to meet the needs of the guests who were confined to the shelter during the pandemic. I call this time my "Esther Season," because the shelter guests did not know I was a minister until the pandemic was going on too long for the first year. I began that first Easter of preaching and sharing an encouraging word on Sunday, and we could not have large gatherings, not necessarily worship services. We had over 260 women in two shelter locations. On my first attempt, I provided two services at each location. So, I was truly clear on the assignment that God had given to me: I must socially distance, ensure that guests are masked, not allow social media, with one song and a twenty-minute preached word. Because we are a state organization, I could not risk preaching and/or proselytizing on county funding. I also had to provide devotional and inspirational books for people who were not believers. The service lasted no longer than twenty minutes, and guests didn't need to participate. Yet the response was overwhelming.

In my current role, I facilitate workshops for the staff that focus on self-care and wellness. My role allows me to create an environment that encourages them through bereavement and difficult seasons in their lives. I spend quality time encouraging them to be the best that they can be. I also lead professional workshops to advocate for

professional work and development for staff when grievances are filed against them for poor work performance.

The Present Ministry

As a full-time employee at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, I serve as the Culture Coach and Client's Rights Officer. At the Norma Herr Women's Center, I was hired to work in aftercare for women placed in permanent housing during their first 60 days. My role as the Housing Stability Specialist was to collaborate and engage with our Compassion Navigators, who assist guests already in permanent housing and who need additional support for up to six months. I helped educate the local community about the importance of partnering with the Norma Herr Women's Center. The goal was to gather furniture, connect participants with community resources, link them with faith-based services, and provide comprehensive support — mind, body, and soul. I always maintained a caseload of fifty former residents of NHWC. In that role, I followed each individual on that caseload from six months to a year, meeting with them once a month and staying in touch with potential aftercare services.

Now that the pandemic has ended and the doors are open to volunteers and the community, I coordinate the outdoor church worship services that meet indoors. I provide Bibles and spiritual support to foster spiritual growth for the staff and guests of Norma Herr Women's Center. One challenge I face is meeting the needs of people from diverse backgrounds and belief systems. In my office, I keep devotional books and motivational and inspirational materials for all staff. I plan annual retreats for staff and support their professional development for those who want to grow and advance in the marketplace.

This creates a positive opportunity to recruit professional volunteers and Faith Partners who wish to network and volunteer with staff and guests transitioning out of NHWC.

As the Culture Coach, my role at the YWCA is unique in that it addresses the concerns of the women at the Norma Herr Center, a homeless shelter on the east side of Cleveland. My role is instrumental in motivating, training, and equipping the professional support staff that serves with compassion the women of Norma Herr Women's Center. The Culture Coach celebrates their accomplishments and counsels staff who face challenges in the marketplace.

Developed Synergy

As I explore Project Hope for my Doctor of Ministry project, its significance emerges from my belief that God has ordained a purpose for me to do the greater work that he has called me to minister and touch the hearts of the broken-hearted in homeless shelters, pre-release centers, and people who do not come to organized church settings. As I have re-examined the testimony of my sexual abuse in my spiritual autobiography, I realized the incident left me in isolation and lacking the spiritual support of even my pastor and local church. Although I have never been homeless, my testimony is that God has encouraged me through His scriptures, and by His grace, He has blessed me to teach and edify those who are marginalized.

As a young adult, I knew I wanted to make a difference in the lives of the underserved community. My first job was as an intake coordinator for the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cleveland. For thirteen years, I worked with those facing civil lawsuits, including landlord-tenant disputes, evictions, domestic violence, divorce, and tort cases. I quickly learned that many people lost their civil lawsuits because they were

afraid to respond to legal documents—they had nowhere to go and couldn't read the paperwork served to them. At the time, I was studying as an undergraduate, and God was strengthening my prayer life as an intercessor. I was often the first-person clients before going to court. Many times, I would pray privately and publicly, asking God to intervene on their behalf in the courthouse.

I am often amazed by how God used me at Legal Aid Society for years, learning advocacy for the least of these, and I was assigned to attorneys on the docket for eviction hearings. God allowed me to learn the judicial system, and he granted me favor with courthouse administrators to make a difference in the lives of poor people. My boss at Legal Aid, C. Lyonel Jones, would often tell me I would be a counselor or an attorney because I knew the law so well. I would go into the courtroom and pray for them so that they would remain in their public housing.

So here I am, years later, working with homeless people. I often say that homeless people are there by divine appointment. In my 35-plus years of working and journeying with them, I have learned the myths that are not true. Myth #1: Homeless people do not have families. Yes, they do. Many families have exhausted their resources and cannot afford to house all of their loved ones. Myth #2: Homeless people are not spiritual, or they do not know God. This is far from the truth; many have a personal relationship with God but have fallen out of fellowship with God. Many homeless people with trauma-informed perspectives on life have expressed how God abandoned them in their crisis. Myth #3: Many homeless people have lost HOPE in LIFE and do not want to live anymore because of limited resources, and/or because they do not think they can make it.

There have been many times when I've sat with homeless women in a group who have been raped, molested, prostituted, involved in incest for years, or experienced human trafficking; for them, the shelter is a place for healing and restoration. Every time I hear their stories, I am reminded of how Jesus has kept my mind and how he delivered me when I did not know if I would make it. Over the years, I have been counseled by professional therapists to work on forgiveness concerns, but I have learned the power of prayer and its impact on my life. Project Hope matters because it offers the YWCA Leadership Team an opportunity to provide professional development for women who are newly housed, starting over, and appreciative of the supportive services as they transition to permanent, affordable housing.

Empowerment Sessions included "The Power of Prayer," a book by Dr. Myles Munroe. During the sessions, I was able to use instrumental music and to effectively minister to the hearts of the Leadership Team as they wrote in their journals and prayed silently. The power of prayer is vital because it helps them de-escalate staff and guests when facing troubles. Each session gave them an opportunity to share personal prayer requests. I also used a book called The Purpose in Your Pain by Dr. Yvonne Pointer as a daily devotional, reading from it to encourage the Leadership team. This affirming gathering was an intimate time of sharing, allowing the staff the chance to share their personal journey and to be comforted that they are not alone. In the marketplace, we do not ordinarily have a place or space for testimonials, but God allowed staff members to feel that they could share breakthroughs about answered prayer and work concerns, and or personal concerns that are celebrated also in Dr. Myles Monroe's book.[10]

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[10] Munroe, *Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 211–250.

I believe that my personal ministerial experience, coupled with a heart to serve the needs of the Norma Herr Women's Center, empowers homeless women through spiritual formation and support. I believe this because I have experienced it. When many of the women leave the shelter, they call me to inquire about spiritual support and community connections. I am so grateful that God has allowed me to develop healthy, safe, and organized support from community partners and businesses that will make a difference in the lives of women starting over. As I continue to develop the "Project Hope," I know it can endure. The general nature and content of this program are to inspire those in the Marketplace, enrich their spiritual lives, and motivate the hearts of God's people.

Project Hope, promised to be An Achor of Hope for the Leadership Team

Over the years, I have frequently noted while teaching the staff that we are "The Hands and Feet of Jesus." Meaning: we are just vessels used by God to do His work and serve. God wanted me to continue to serve with more COMPASSION to the "least of these." As a scholar, I am certain that I will be facilitating more workshops, classes, and training sessions for the Norma Herr staff as we work to be more compassionate and to meet the needs of the many homeless women in the Cleveland metropolitan area.

God has encouraged me to author a book for others who work in this ministerial context and Marketplace Ministry to influence them for greatness! I also seek to learn about new churches, mission groups, and women's ministries that want to make a difference in the life of a homeless woman, and to walk in the mission of the church by following the words of Matthew 25. I also looked forward to making a difference in the administration at Norma Herr Women's Center, and I believe that proper administration can truly make an impact for NHWC's women.

My professional goal was also to build an internal network of positive businesses to aid women in transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. It is also my desire to close the door on recidivism so that women can find their hope in God using spiritual guidance and material resources available to sustain a lasting family home. Many of the women that have been transformed need resources and hope to start all over again. The Leadership team possess the strength to encourage the residents and motivate them for stability in permanent housing. Hope has been the missing ingredient for residents to survive and thrive in their new stabilized housing.

Conclusion

This chapter shared my personal ministry journey and the desire to plan and prepare to provide professional Empowerment Workshops for the staff of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland that are essential for Project Hope to be successful for the women of Norma Herr Women's Center and the Early Learning Center. The workshops were inclusive of four foundational training courses for the Leadership team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. The Foundations are inclusive of Biblical Foundation, Historical Foundation, Theological Foundation and Interdisciplinary Foundation in addition to journaling, reflective music and intentional prayer time. As we continue to be the "Hands and Feet of Jesus," I have found over the years that many times when people are in crisis, they want to know about the Savior and are willing to hear from someone who shares about the love of God. (Luke 24:39).

Spiritual formation is developed when we learn how to pray or are encouraged by someone who can motivate us with a word of inspiration or a song. After writing and preparing this chapter, the vision for how Project Hope will make a difference: with

"Empowerment Sessions" for the Leadership Team. In addition, the goal of Project Hope is to cultivate monthly updates on Wellness and encourage the professional staff. It is also important to discover their why, of why they work at the YWCA of Greter Cleveland. I am blessed to say that I have been that one on assignment in the marketplace to lead people out of darkness into His marvelous light

In every chapter of this research, I was reassured of the significance of training to be a servant leader. Many of the staff took their assignments to journal, read, or meditate very seriously. Although these sessions were not mandatory, there was a personal commitment that was shared by all of the Leadership team that participated in Project Hope

It is my understanding that out of our misery, God will give you a ministry. I am grateful and honored to be a wounded healer in pouring into the lives of those leaders that pour into the least of these. So grateful that God trusted me with this assignment to minister to the broken hearted and professionally utilize my administrative gifts to educate, train, and equip the professional staff that wanted to make an impact with the people God has called us to serve. It is so important that as we serve the least of these, we are doing it, as unto the Lord, which is rewarding to make a difference and impact lives of homeless women and children in the local community,

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Sheep and the Goats – Matthew 25:31-46

31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him,
he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him,
and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the
sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are
blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since
the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I
was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited
me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry
and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" 38 When did we see
you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did
we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
40 The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the
least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are
cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." 42 For I was
hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to
drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you
did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
44 They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or
a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
45 He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the
least of these, you did not do for me.[1]

This exegetical study is about the New Testament scripture Matthew 25: 31-46 and will feature: The Final Judgment with Structure of the Last Judgement Passage; an

[1] Turner, *Matthew*, 609.

Overview of Matthew 25: 31-46; an Overview of the Gospel of Matthew; Three Forms of Analysis (Contextual, Formal, and Detailed Analysis); a section on How This Passage Informs the Project, and the Importance of What the Scripture means for this current context of ministry. The study climaxes with the summation of the scripture and shares the problem statement: how Matthew 25 provides strong support for the Biblical Foundation of this exegetical study.

Writing this exegetical study first demands reading the scripture. Michael J. Gorman's Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers served as the scholarly basis for surveying the scriptures from a more grounded academic standpoint[2]. During exegesis, recurring themes emerged in this passage, such as the metaphorical images of the goats and the sheep. There were also repeated references to judgment, the "final judgment," and the eternal rewards that come with obedience to God's word. The words "Judgment" and "Eternal life" were emphasized throughout this scripture. Scholars often debate the meaning behind the separation of the sheep and the goats, viewing it as a warning against disobedience to God's holy word.

Although the context of this study was at the YWCA, its purpose was to explore, educate, and build relationships with the YWCA Leadership Team to be a vital resource for women who are currently housed and transitioning back into the community. The Biblical passages foundational to Project Hope are based on the New Testament passage in Matthew 25:31-46, and the word of God encourages us to care for "the least of these."

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[2] Michael J. Gorman, "The Text," in *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 37.

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats: "The Life Choices of the Righteous" is a study that interprets the sheep's inheritance for how they treated Christ, through acts of kindness and mercy during their lives on earth. The righteous will ask when they ever served Him, and the King will respond that in serving others, they were, in fact, serving Him.[3]

God promises to reward those who take care of "the least of these." It is one's spiritual assignment to take care of those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, and incarcerated. What is most important is obedience to God. As such, this study and the collaborative Project Hope was purposed to make a difference and an impact on "the least of these." It is important to train, equip and educate the staff to have the compassion needed to work with people who have suffered under trauma informed care.

This Biblical passage in support of Project Hope is based on the New Testament scripture found in Matthew 25:31-46, in which the word of God encourages us to take care of "the least of these." In this scripture, the "least of these" are the marginalized, the homeless, and those who cannot take care of themselves. Many of these women have been homeless for at least 1 to 2 years and have not had to pay monthly utilities and/or manage a financial budget. Project Hope provided professional workshops, including human resource training, to understand the importance of hiring people to serve with compassion and encourage "the least of these."[4]

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[3] David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 612.

[4] Matthew Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," in *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible,* 46, Bible Gateway, accessed February 14, 2025, https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/matthew-henry/Matt.25.31–Matt.25.46.

The Contextual Analysis

Overview of the Bible Passage Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)

The gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25:31-36 presents a moment of Judgement for the Sheep and the Goats. In some commentaries, the episode is noted as The Final Judgement, yet this text became the inspiration for "Project Hope." Newly housed women starting over again need hope to maintain stability in new housing and connect with community resources that will allow them to continue to thrive in independent self-sufficiency.[5]

The Gospel of Matthew

The book of Matthew is best known as "the most circumstantial Gospel that we possess." Matthew's gospel divides into three or four parts: the introduction of Jesus by way of genealogy, His birth, baptism, and temptation in the desert (1-4), His public ministry in and around Galilee (5-16:20); and the last days in Jerusalem, with His passion, death and resurrection (16:21-28:20). But at the heart of Matthew are the discourses of Jesus, which alternate with narrative sections that can be roughly divided into five groups: the Sermon on the Mount (ethical, 5-7); the Mission Charge (apostolic, 10); the Kingdom of God Parables (kerygmatic, revelational, 13); Community Discipline,

[5] Turner, *Matthew,* 603

(ecclesiastical, 18); and the Second Coming (eschatological, 24-25). Each ends with a similar "completion" formula: "When Jesus had finished."[6]

The setting (Matthew 25:31-33)

The setting is a grim picture of the lazy slave (25: 30), setting the scene for this account of Jesus's coming with his angels (Zech. 14: 5 LXX: cf. Matt. 13: 41, 49; 16: 27: 24: 31) as the glorious Son of Man to judge the nations. An added detail is the mention of his sitting on his glorious throne (Matt. 19:28; cf. 5:34, 23:22; Luke 1:32, Rev. 3:21m 11). The judgment is universal: all nations are gathered on His right and left, just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt. 13:41, 49; Ezek. 34:17-22). In this context (unlike Matt. 20:23), the right hand is the place of honor (22:44; 26:64), cf. I Kings 2:19) and the left is a place of shame (cf. 6:3, 27:38, I Kings 22:19). This "judgment" is not like a trial, containing suspense about the verdict, but is like post-trial hearing, where the sentence is pronounced (cf. John 5:22, 27; 2 Cor. 5:10). Given other passages, it is fitting for sheep to stand for genuine followers of Jesus.[7]

Exegesis

Hagner[8] cogently observes that "the final section of the eschatological discourse ends fittingly in a great judgment scene." This discourse, which began with the disciples' question about Jesus's coming (24:3), ends with his coming to judge all the nations. But

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[6] Howard W. Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 46.

[7] Turner, *Matthew,* 608.

[8] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central,

the disciples' question was primarily chronological, and this passage deals with the significance of Jesus' coming, not its timing. It amounts to an exposition of 10:40-42 and 24:29-31. The following simple analysis shows the chiastic structure of this pericope:

The Structure of the Last Judgement Passage (Matt. 25:31-46)
Setting: Glorious return of the Son of Man expressed metaphorically.
Sheep on the right and goats on the left (25:31-33)
Judgment of the sheep (25:34-40)
Judgment of the goats (25:41-45)
Destiny of sheep: Eternal life (25:46b)

Expression of Matthew 25:31-46

Detailed Analysis

What are the main points of each part of the text, and how does the text/author make these points?

> The Sheep and the Goats
> 31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him,
> he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him,
> and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the
> sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
> 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are
> blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since
> the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I
> was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited
> me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me,
> I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
> 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry
> and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" 38 When did we see
> you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did
> we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
> 40 The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the
> least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
> 41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are
> cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." 42 For I was
> hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to
> drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you
> did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
> 44 They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or
> a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

> [45] He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.[9]

There is a reflection of the Final Judgment with the Glorious return of the Son of Man expressed metaphorically; Sheep on the right and goats on the left (25:31-33), the Judge's verdict for the sheep, and the reward for caring for the judge. (25:34-37).

Relationship Between Details and Overall Meaning

Several commentaries argue over the interpretation of this passage and earnestly debate it — in an expansive body of literature, containing painstaking discussions of each exegetical detail, especially the identity of "all the nations" in 25:32, and of Jesus's siblings in 25:40, 45. This passage requires theologians to probe the depths of the relationships between faith and works (Mitton 1956-57), rendering its implications for Christian ethics undeniable (Donahue 1986: via 1987). As such, this is noted as one of the profoundly difficult texts in Matthew, and Gray (1989) notes thirty-two different interpretations of the passage, although three are most commonly encountered (Ladd, qtd. in Longnecker and Tenney, 1974: 191-99).[10]

In reading this pericope of scripture, there are common themes of Eternal punishment in (Matthew 25:46a) and the metaphor of Sheep: Eternal Life (Matthew 25:46b). In this pattern of the scripture, it is important to note the repetitive, poetic phrasing. There is a constant reminder of the assignment for missions.

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[9] Turner, *Matthew*, 609.

[10] Turner, *Matthew,* 609.

The King and the Sheep (Matthew 25:34-40)

> [35] For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, [36] I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
> [37] Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

When the inquiry is made repeatedly — about giving Jesus something to eat, and providing drink for thirst, and providing clothes — the question echoes the compassion of what is required to serve God's people. In Matthew Henry's commentary, the grounds for this directive are clear (Matt. 25:35, 36):

> For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that any good words of ours merit the happiness of heaven, by an intrinsic worth or excellency in them; our goodness extends not unto God, but it is plan that Jesus Christ will judge the word by the same rule by which he governs it, and therefore will reward those that have been obedient to that law; and mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as their evidence of an interest in Christ, and his purchase.
>
> The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'[11]

The "least of these" is a phrase that originates from Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus speaks of those in need. Verses 35-40 read:

> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feeding you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and

[11] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46."

> visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'[12]

The "least of these" refers to those in a variety of needy situations. They include the hungry, the thirsty, the impoverished, the sick, and the imprisoned. In this context, Jesus is speaking to those on His right — that is, to the righteous. The needy are called Christ's "brothers;" thus, the reference is to the righteous helping fellow disciples. Jesus said that those who cared for such individuals were not merely serving other people: they were serving Him. In the same passage, the opposite is also noted. The narrative concludes with Jesus condemning those who saw believers in need and yet did not help:

> He says, "For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'[13]

Jesus connected service to the needy with eternal rewards and punishments. Though salvation is by faith alone apart from good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9), the redeemed will be "eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14), including extending charity to fellow believers in difficult situations. Those whose lives are marked by apathy toward the needy show they have not been transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. God has always shown a special concern for the poor and needy (Psalm 35:10). It should come as no surprise that He expects His followers to do the same, especially toward those of the family of God

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[12] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5–6.

[13] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5–6.

(Galatians 6:10). What is surprising about the "least of these" is that service is ultimately not to the poor, but to Christ Himself.[14]

Jesus connected service to the needy with eternal rewards and punishments. Though salvation is by faith alone, apart from good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9), the redeemed will be "eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14), including extending charity to fellow believers in difficult situations. Those whose lives are marked by apathy toward the needy show they have not been transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. God has always shown a special concern for the poor and needy (Psalm 35:10). It should come as no surprise that He expects His followers to do the same, especially toward those of the family of God (Galatians 6:10).[15]

The King and the Goats (Matthew 25:41-45)

> [41] Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." [42] For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, [43] I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
> [44] They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
> [45] He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'[16]

These verses are symmetrically repetitive of 25:34-40, except that those on the King's left must depart into eternal fire (7:23; 18:8; cf. Ps. 6:8; Isa. 30:33; Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 1 En. 10.13; 67.13; 2En. 10.4-6) because they did not help Jesus when he was in need (cf.

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[14] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5–6.

[15] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 1.

[16] Turner, *Matthew*, 609.

Luke 16:19-31). They, too, are amazed at the basis of the judgment. The scholars debate the final discourse. It is noteworthy, against a fatalistic view of eternal punishment, that the fire (3:12; 13:42, 50:18:8-9) is not prepared for those on the King's left but for the devil and his angels, who are the demons. Also, unlike the Kingdom in 25:34, the place of eternal fire is said to be prepared from the creation of the world: "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." This passage speaks clearly to the most awesome matter, humanity's eternal destiny. The juxtaposition of eternal life and eternal punishment in Matthew 25:46 renders the notion of the annihilation of the lost, sometimes called immortality, as theological wishful thinking (Yarbrough in C. Morgan and Peterson 2004: 67-90, esp. 76, 81-82). The blessed will experience unspeakable joy in God's presence forever, and the cursed will experience unspeakable horror in separation from God. Matthew's descriptions of the destiny of the lost utilize two metaphors, the first is fire (3:12, 13:40, 50; 18:8-9; 25:41, 45; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; 2 Pet 3:7; Jude 7; Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8) and secondly the deep darkness (Matt. 8:12, 22:13, 25:30; cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6, 13). The eternally excruciating experience of hell is unspeakably worse than the two metaphors here portraying it[17].

Finally, the implications of this passage for Christology are similarly awesome. Matthew 25:31-46 is a commentary on the realization of Dan. 7:13-27. Jesus has angels at his disposal (Matt. 26:53; 28:2). He is the ultimate judge of humanity and King of the world. Yet Jesus is about to allow himself to be crucified. In this light, the entire narrative of Jesus's arrest, hearings, and crucifixion is one great irony.

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[17] Turner, *Matthew*, 609.

How This Passage Informs the Project

This passage supports Project Hope as a biblical foundation for understanding the people and culture the leadership team serves at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. Many of the professional staff are not experienced in being homeless, so it is important that they are trained and developed as professionals to better serve this indigent population.

These scriptural passages above remind of the virtue of self-denial and contempt of the world, reckoning the things of the world as having value only to the extent that we are enabled to do good with them: and those who have not wherewithal to do good, must show the same disposition, by being contentedly and cheerfully poor. Those are fit for heaven that are mortified to the earth (James 2:15-16).[18] It also reminds one to love their brethren, which is the second great commandment, the fulfilling of the law, and an excellent preparation for the world of everlasting love. One must give proof of this love by their readiness to do good, and to communicate good wishes is but a mockery without good work. (John 3:17)[19]

Those who have nothing to give must show the same disposition in some other way. A believing regard to Jesus Christ. That which is here reward is the relieving of the poor for Christ's sake, out of love to him, and with an eye to him. This puts an excellency upon the good work, when in it we serve the Lord Christ, who may do that work for their own living, as well as those who help to keep others' lives.

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[18] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5.

[19] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5.

God promises to reward those who take care of "the least of these." It is one's spiritual assignment to take care of those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, and incarcerated. What is most important is obedience to God. Therefore, this Project Hope provided the faith-based organization with a unique opportunity to partner with the Norma Herr Women's Center to make a difference in the transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency as people move into affordable public housing.

The good works mentioned in Matthew 25 are commonly called works of charity to the poor: not but that many will be found on the right hand who never were in a capacity to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, but were themselves fed and clothed by the charity of others; but one instance of sincere obedience is put for all the rest, and it teaches this in general: that faith working by love is all in Christianity; Show me thy faith by thy works and nothing will abound to a good account hereafter, but the fruits of righteousness in a good conversation now.[20]

While Matthew 25:31-46 provided the *mandate* for the YWCA's mission—serving the least of these—it became clear during this project that the *method* for sustaining this work lay in Isaiah 40:28-31. The professional staff, who acted as the 'hands and feet' of this ministry, often faced compassion fatigue and burnout. Therefore, to effectively feed the hungry and clothe the naked (Matthew 25), the leadership had to first 'renew their strength' and 'mount up with wings like eagles' (Isaiah 40). This project focused on the latter scripture to ensure the fulfillment of the former.

To support the hypothesis, the Empowerment Sessions were designed to train, support, and motivate the Leadership Team, who work daily in the trenches with guests

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[20] Henry, "Matthew 25:31–46," 5.

and staff on the critical issues of working with unhoused women. The facilitator created a safe environment for them to share concerns about working with unhoused people and indigent communities at large. In the beginning sessions, it was important to develop teamwork within the Leadership team. In the book *Fired Up or Burned Out, on How to Reignite Your Team's Passion, Creativity, and Productivity*, the initial training was team building, which provided the essential foundation for facilitating inter-team communication.

The training consisted of the "Three Keys to Connecting Your Team, and Lighting their Fires: Vision, Value, and Voice."[21] It was important for the training to set the ground rules that sharing their voice was valued. In responding to Pre-Questionnaires and Post-Questionnaires, trust had to be established that what was shared there would be shared during their learning time. The facilitator provided the vision for the workshops so they could better serve the staff and the homeless women and children who reside there.

Over the years, the Leadership Team's resilience has been tested by insufficient training and support, which has affected their sense of value within the agency. Working in a trauma-informed environment comes with challenges every day that affect the morale of working at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. In the HR Department, it can be frustrating to hire new people and train them repeatedly. It was important to set up this 7-week intentional training with spiritual enrichment and motivation to help them succeed in the marketplace.

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[21] Michael Lee Stallard, Carolyn Dewing-Hommes, and Jason Pankau, *Fired Up or Burned Out: How to Reignite Your Team's Passion, Creativity, and Productivity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 43–74.

The voice segment allowed an opportunity to engage with concerns that all members of the Leadership team had encountered while working there. Many of the leadership team bonded over sharing their experiences working with underqualified staff and the barriers this creates to developing professional colleagues. The Empowerment Sessions were designed to troubleshoot difficult situations with co-workers in the workplace while maintaining the morale needed to work together for the best interests of the people we serve in the marketplace.

During the Empowerment Sessions, the Leadership team began to get to know each other better, and this allowed them to share their faith journeys and why they are called to work with the indigent population. Some staff have been homeless themselves, and others have a passion for making a difference for people in need. The sessions were also revealing of staff who have a more corporate vision versus a missional leadership approach, with working on staff issues of attendance, work performance, and promotion to professional development.

Summation

Newly housed homeless women return to a shelter when there are no supportive networks in place for them to be stabilized in permanent housing. This exegetical study of Matthew 25:37-46 explored the resources of dialogue on the importance of why we are called to serve the "least of these." Project Hope was a positive opportunity for the marketplace ministry to be encouraged and empowered to make a difference in the lives of homeless people. It was important for the Leadership team to know how valuable they were to operate in compassion in meeting the needs of homeless people. This exegetical study in Matthew 25:31-46 provided biblical support for women who are transitioning

into affordable housing from Norma Herr Women's Center—supporting the needs of the least of these. It is significant supportive care that can make a difference to a woman who is moving out and in need of supportive, wrap-around services, and spiritual support to successfully maintain affordable housing.

By addressing these gaps, Project Hope established a sustainable foundation for the Leadership Team to support the agency's improvement. The initiative empowered the Leadership team with a comprehensive support system that extended well beyond the initial move into housing. The integration of spiritual guidance with practical support ensured alignment with foundational scripture, emphasizing the divine call to serve "the least of these." On a broader scale, this study has served as a model for others on strategies for establishing and sustaining collaborative partnerships with people in any community, as all are needed and called to support the least of these, as commanded by the word of God. It was important for them to understand how valued they are to the indigent people that we serve every day at the YWCA.

The Leadership team was trained on "Vision: Guest Leaders never lose sight of the Big Picture." It teaches that Followers see the here and now, versus Leaders who see the ultimate goals and potential. Followers are driven by the atmosphere of today, whereas Leaders are driven by their vision for tomorrow. Followers' limited perspective on their abilities versus a larger perspective on everyone's abilities. Followers can be diverted by today's losses versus Leaders who stay on track by focusing on the goal. Followers go by the keyword immediate, while Leaders go by the keyword ultimate.[22]

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[22] John C. Maxwell, commentary to *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 857.

Services Needed

Former guests of Norma Herr have needed extra help with financial literacy because many have not paid rent and need to learn how to pay bills on time. Professional business volunteers, for example, can assist by teaching former guests budgeting, writing checks, or managing their financial resources, a weekly service for the first 30 days that would support former guests.

Many services that women have needed have been identified through the newly housed guests' move-out of the homeless shelter. Each newly housed guest is assigned a Housing Stabilization Specialist, who serves as their case manager for six months to a year after they leave the shelter. In this role, she helps identify resources for the new residents. Many face issues, such as a lack of furniture or a lack of a truck to pick up in-kind donations. Some women find resources but require support to move furniture into their new apartments.

"The Final Judgment" was shared with Structure of the Last Judgement Passage, Overview of the Bible Passage: Matthew 25:31-46, The Overview of the Gospel of Matthew; Three Forms of Analysis: Contextual, Formal, and Detailed Analysis, How This Passage Informs the Project, and the Importance of What the Scripture means for this current context of ministry climaxing with the Summation. The study also revealed the passion, purpose, and need for Project Hope among the Leadership Team of the YWCA.

With many services being reduced under the current 2025 presidential administration, innovative outreach strategies are crucial for supporting newly housed women. The ultimate objective is to lower recidivism rates, ensuring that these women do not have to return to shelters once they have secured housing. In summation, this exegesis

entailed a thorough study of Matthew 25:31-46. This scripture encourages us, as believers, to do what the word says, out of obedience to God's Holy Word. This study served as a tool to learn and strategize the implementation of the final Project Hope project, to educate and affirm the Leadership Team at the YWCA.

As the Empowerment Session are professionally developed it will allow opportunities for more workshops to enhance the development of staff individually and working in groups. Many of the Leadership team have requested personal books to read and journal outside of the sessions so that they can work on their own personal spiritual formation. As we begin and end each session we open with a scripture and close with a prayer with the concerns of those in attendance in the Empowerment Session. The team really take this serious even if they are not going to be in attendance in the session, staff member will email their prayer request so that they can be included in community.

During our session on Wellness, a discussion was developed out the importance of taking care themselves so that they can better take care of the people that we serve. It was also important to maintain your personal mental health when burned out or stressed out to a point when you are taking excessive time off due to work related issues and overwhelming work schedules. We have some people who take off excessive amounts of time and we have others who are workaholics and have to continue to work on balance in the marketplace. The YWCA values the provision of Employment Assistance Services (EAP) through Moore Counseling as an essential staff benefit. This service ensures that professional staff have access to counseling support when personal circumstances or work performance require assistance. There have been times where our own personal

issues can be triggered and we seek assistance in coping day to day concerns working in a trauma informed environment at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

The entire staff is a valuable asset in working at the YWCA, so the Empowerment session are an intentional opportunity to encourage and motivate the staff with spiritual enrichment. The Humano Resource team continue to follow the trends of training to for resiliency and sustainability in the marketplace. This biblical foundation in Matthew 25:31-46 gives them the knowledge and compassion to the meet the ongoing needs of :”the least of these.”

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height: An Introduction

This chapter examines the life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height==a woman who spent a lifetime, nearly eight decades, fighting against segregation and racism. Height was significant in advocating for women's rights and serving as a spokesperson for unity in the African American family.

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height was a dynamic woman in history, and this provided an opportunity to study, reflect, read, and learn more about this unsung African American woman in American history. Dr. Height is recognized as one of the preeminent social and Civil Rights activists of her time, particularly in the struggle for equality, social justice, and human rights for all people. This chapter reflects on the life of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height and the issues she faced during her decades-long struggle for racial equality for African American women. Yet as the sole woman among powerful, charismatic men, and as someone whose personal ambition was always secondary to her passion for her cause, she has received little mainstream recognition until the later years of her life.

This chapter details her childhood encounters with racism in her hometown of Rankin, Pennsylvania, the thrill of New York college during the Harlem Renaissance, and her first battles as a young caseworker during the Depression. This impressive portrait illustrates how God used her to do phenomenal things to make a difference in the

lives of broken people. This chapter will encourage you to appreciate the many daily encounters she had with notable people she served with at the White House, as well as the private meetings where she sat at the table and advocated for the rights of women and children.

Height's Impact on Social Justice

The life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy I. Height serve primarily to showcase sisterhood and the mission that connected her to Project Hope. These include how secular movements advocate for the rights of women and children and the importance of African American pioneers who paved the way for social justice. This research honors Dr. Height's accomplishments and her role as a voice of change for subsequent generations.[1]

Dr. Height's early years, in her work career, her years with the YWCA and as President of the Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. Dr. Height's leadership with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), her significant role at the YWCA, and her milestone achievements, sum up her legacy as a motivational figure for the women of Norma Herr Women's Center.[2]

Dr. Height protested against lynchings in Times Square. She sat onstage as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. In her lifetime, she met the most extraordinary people she knew over the decades: W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary McLeod Bethune, Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Langston

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[1] Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 28.

[2] National Council of Negro Women, "Living with Purpose: A Tribute to Dorothy I. Height," YouTube, April 20, 2010, video, 4:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ.

Hughes, W.C. Handy, and many others. She led the National Council of Negro Women for 41 years, advocating tirelessly for women's movement leaders to join forces with those in the Civil Rights movement.[3]

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height, because of her dual role as a Harlem Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) staff member and NCNW volunteer, integrated her social work training with her commitment to rise above the limitations of race and sex. She rose quickly through the ranks of the YWCA, from the Emma Ransom House in Harlem to the Executive Director of the Phyllis Wheatley Association in Washington, D.C., and to the National Staff.[4]

Dorothy I. Height was also a journalist who spoke out on Civil Rights issues, fighting for the rights of African Americans and women. In the summer of 1968, Height shared her views on the controversy of Rosa Parks. One issue concerns the Montgomery bus boycott. Rosa Parks was a seamstress who, on her way home from work, refused to sit in the back of the bus. When the driver insisted that she move, she refused, and she was arrested. Rosa Parks was a prominent member of her Baptist church, and when she was jailed, her minister was called. That minister was Martin Luther King, Jr. He went to jail. The news that Rosa Parks was in jail was sent out and began spreading through the African American community. Next, the radio announced that the African Americans had decided to stay off the buses, then that 18 percent had stayed off that day, and 20 percent. Soon, in the African American community, which lacked any media at its disposal, the word began to spread: "The radio says African Americans are not to ride the buses." As

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[3] Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates,* 64-65.

[4] Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates,* 71.

the situation developed, the message was, “The radio says almost no African Americans are riding the buses.” Before long, all the African Americans received the message --- African Americans were not riding the buses, and those few who continued to ride were subject to much criticism.[5]

The Early Years of Dorothy I. Height

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height was born in Richmond, Virginia, on March 24, 1912. Her life exemplifies a passionate commitment to a just society and a vision of a better world. Educated in public schools in Rankin, Pennsylvania, a borough of Pittsburgh, where her family moved when she was four.[6]

Height’s father was a self-employed building contractor, and her mother was active in the Pennsylvania Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs. Journalist Lea E. Williams elaborates about the clubs of this kind: “Organizations like these began forming in the late 19th century to counter negative stereotypes, decry lynching and Jim Crow laws, and combat the woeful neglect of Black women’s suffrage.”[7] In her autobiography, Height describes attending many of these meetings with her mother. It was there that she saw women working, organizing, and teaching themselves, and learned much about uplifting the race.

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[5] Dorothy Height, “A Time to Listen: Civil Rights and the Mass Media,” *Southwest Review* 53, no. 3 (1968): 217–24, http://32.174.250/150.

[6] Anne Wallace Sharp, *Civil Rights Leader* (Farmington Hills, MI: Lucent Books, 2013), 28, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[7] Lea E. Williams, “Dorothy Irene Height: A Life Well-Lived,” *Phi Beta Kappa Forum*, June 22, 2011, accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Dorothy+Irene+Height%3a+a+life-well-lived.-a0278526803.

When Height was a high school student, she became a finalist in a speech contest. Height established herself early as a dedicated student with exceptional oratorical skills after winning a $1,000 scholarship in a national oratorical contest in the United States. Just before delivering her speech, which focused on world peace, she was denied entry to a large hotel because of her race. Infuriated, Height immediately changed the wording of her discrimination incident to the Biblical story of Mary and Joseph being denied a place in the inn. Height won the contest and the college scholarship.[8]

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height - Education

She applied to New York's Bernard College but was refused entry because it had already reached its quota for Black students. She later wrote, "Although I had been accepted, they could not admit me." It took time for her to fully understand that the rejection was due to her race. She was subsequently accepted at New York University, where she obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees in educational psychology. Dr. Dorothy Height was taught by NYU to fight hard, promote justice and equality, and see the beauty in every human being.

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height - Work History

Beginning as a Civil Rights advocate in the 1930s, Height soon gained prominence through her tireless efforts to promote interracial schooling, to register and educate voters, and to increase the visibility and status of women in society. Height's first

[8] Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*, 125.

job was as a social worker for the United Christian Youth Movement, investigating the problems of young people.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

In 1937, Dorothy Height accepted a position with the Harlem Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in New York. The YWCA, which began in England in 1855, has since grown over the years into an organization of women working for social and economic change. Height became the residence director of the Emma Ransom House, one of the few places in Harlem where Black girls could go while looking for work. Research showed that Black women would stand on street corners in Harlem, and people seeking workers would stop and pick up employees. Not everyone was honest, and many women fell victim to rape or other crimes. Height raised these issues with the New York council, but little was done to protect the women. In her early years working for the YWCA, Height was an advocate for social change to improve women's rights.

In 1938, Height served in her dual role as a YWCA staff member and a volunteer for the National Council of Negro Women. She combined her social work training with her dedication to overcoming racial and gender barriers. In 1939, she moved back to Washington, D.C., to work for the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA. There, she teamed up with young Black women who were coming to the nation's capital during World War II to find jobs. Most of these women reportedly could not find housing because the city was segregated and had very few places for African Americans to live. As Dorothy Height continued advocating for women's rights, she shared her findings with the U.S.

government. Thanks to her efforts, Lucy Diggs Slowe Hall was built specifically for Black women.[9]

In 1944, Height returned to New York to serve as the secretary for interracial education at the YWCA. In this role, she created guidelines on how to organize and work with interracial groups. She later attended the YWCA's national convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1946, and supported the creation of a document known as the Interracial Charter. Among other things, the charter declared: "Whenever there is injustice based on race, where in the community, the nation, or the world, our protest must be clear and our labor for its removal, vigorous and steady." Despite opposition from Southern delegates, who did not want it approved, the charter was passed, and the organization began to focus its efforts on racial equality. The YWCA became one of the first national service organizations to place Black people into leadership roles, and Height was present to advocate for the rights of women from all social classes.

In 1952, Height served as a sitting professor at the University of Delhi, India, in the Delhi School of Social Work, which was founded by the YWCA of India, Burma, and Ceylon. She became known for her internationalism and humanitarianism, conducting studies and traveling to expand the work of the YWCA. Height is noted for her study of the training of women's organizations in five African countries, under the Committee of Correspondence: Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.

Dr. Dorothy Height continued to grow and develop in various positions throughout her professional development, working for the YWCA for over thirty-three

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[9] "Celebrating Dorothy Height," *YWCA St. Paul*, April 21, 2020, https://www.ywcastpaul.org/celebrating-dorothy-height/ (see appendix F, 166).

years (1944-1977). Height served on the National Board of the YWCA of the USA and held several leadership roles in public affairs and leadership training, including serving as Director of the National YWCA School for Professional Workers. In 1965, she was inaugurated as Director of the Center for Racial Justice, a position she held until her official retirement.[10]

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 1947

After becoming a member in 1939, Height was elected the President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 1947 and led the organization for nearly a decade. During her tenure, she oversaw the integration of the first international chapter, which expanded the reach of the historical Black sorority. In her autobiography, Height recalled,

> "My years of involvement [with Delta Sigma Theta] have afforded me wisdom I would never otherwise possess and given me an even greater thirst for knowledge and for new ventures to be of service to others. The power of sisterhood for African American women is a very strong force indeed."

Height was elected National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 1947 and served until 1956. She carried the sorority to a new level of organizational development, initiation eligibility, and social action throughout her term. Her leadership training, social work background, and recognition of volunteerism benefited the sorority as it moved into a new era of activism on the national and international stage.

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[10] "Remembering Civil Rights Activist Dorothy Irene Height (BA '33, MA '35, HON '75)," NYU Steinhardt, April 20, 2020, accessed February 27, 2025, https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/news/remembering-steinhardt-alumna-dorothy-height-champion-social-justice-10th-anniversary-her. The article notes that Dr. Height "taught NYU to fight hard, promote justice and equality and see the beauty in every human being" and highlights her role in organizing the "historic March on Washington, DC."

National Council of Negro Women (NCNW)

The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), noted as an American umbrella organization, was founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in New York City on December 5, 1935. The NCNW mission is "to advance opportunities and the quality of life for African American women, their families and communities." In 1957, Dr. Dorothy Height was elected president of the NCNW, a position she would hold for forty-one years, even while she continued her work with the YWCA. Most of her work for the NCNW was as a volunteer. Height was able to blend the work that she did for the YWCA and her assignment with NCNW. She and the women of the NCNW also participated in the much-heralded March on Washington on August 28, 1963. Two hundred and fifty thousand people from all over the country attended the event, which was held to demonstrate for jobs and freedom.[11]

While reading the resources and viewing footage from the Civil Rights Era, it was clear that women were present, but some NCNW members were frustrated that women in leadership were ignored in 1963. Height stated: "We could not get women's participation taken seriously…. What happened was so disappointing because women were actually an active part of the whole effort. Indeed, women were the backbone of the movement." It is noted that years later, Dorothy Height reiterated her feeling, and she told interviewers:

> We were not able to get a woman to speak. We accepted that because we saw that the whole objective of freedom and equality and jobs and justice was great enough for us to say "we'll deal with this at another moment.[12]

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[11] Anne Wallace Sharp, *Women Civil Rights Leaders* (New York: Lucent Books, 2013), 221.

[12] Tony Brown, "The Black Leaders Summit of 1972, Part II," *Tony Brown's Journal*, video, accessed February 27, 2025. https://www.tonybrownsjournal.com/the-black-leaders-summit-of-1972-and-the-1998-follow-up-part-ii.

In all footage researched for this project, Dorothy Height is visible at the March on Washington, but Mahalia Jackson is the only African American woman who was allowed to sing at the March. In her autobiography, Height wrote that the male leadership's failure to allow men to speak helped accelerate the women's movement.

The NCNW has also been successful in enabling Black women to design and implement programs in their own communities. One of its accomplishments was the creation of the National Archives for Black Women's History. This archive is home to thousands of documents from countless women's organizations. Today, the organization is committed to strengthening the Black community by focusing on Black history, traditions, and culture. It has a worldwide reach of over 4 million women. Judith Weisenfeld states that the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) was one of the most influential African American women's organizations of the twentieth century.

Height's Influence During the Civil Rights Movement

On August 28, 1963, the nation experienced the March on Washington, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America. This power demonstration, along with sit-ins and other marches, played a critical role in advancing the fight for equality and equity for all people.

On Sunday, August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people crowded the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to stake their claim for jobs and freedom in a turbulent America. But only six groups shared the bulk of the credit for orchestrating the momentous occasion. Not one of the six emerged from the event unchanged. And now, as March on Washington celebrates its 50th anniversary, the divergent paths of some of

these organizations serve as a striking microcosm of Black America in the wake of the Civil Rights movement.

She transitioned to become the President of the NCNW in 1957, an esteemed position she held until 1998. Height maintained her commitment to collaborating with faith-based organizations, which propelled her to the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. One of her most notable achievements was her integral role in organizing the 1963 March on Washington. She is considered one of the "Big Six" leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.

The "Big Six," as the march organizers came to be known, were the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Congress on Racial Equality, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and the National Urban League. Fifty years after the march, three of these organizations are still fighting the same battles they were in 1963; one has experienced a dramatic, rightward shift in its politics, and two have faded away entirely.

The Unsung Heroes of the March

Dorothy I. Height was noted as the Godmother of the Civil Rights Movement, because she was the president of the National Council of Negro Women and one of the chief organizers to gather the women to march, hand out handbills, and door-to-door appeals for people to participate. History books today reflect how Dorothy Height understood the importance of sexism and racism. She was a trailblazer for women today.

Although 12 men spoke at the March on Washington, no women were allowed to speak for this momentous occasion. The only woman who was featured was the soulful

voice of Mahalia Jackson singing before Dr. King declared his famous speech of "I Have a Dream."

The Black Family Reunion

> "We have to improve life, not just for those who have the most skills and those who know how to manipulate the system. But also for and with those who often have so much to give but never get the opportunity. — Dorothy Height

One of Height's greatest accomplishments while serving as president of the NCNW was the creation of the Black Family Reunion. Height explains:

> We wanted a celebration that could serve as a rallying point for government agencies, private and public-sector institutions, corporations, community-based organizations, and families to work on solutions to problems affecting the African American community. The reunions have emphasized traditional values in the Black community.

The first reunion was held in 1986 in Washington, DC., as part of the NCNW's fiftieth anniversary. Games, food, and music were offered, along with exhibits about job training programs, Black history, and a multitude of other things. Other reunions took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Atlanta, Georgia, and Los Angeles, California, to name a few.[13]

Major Accomplishments of Dr. Dorothy I. Height

Dr. Height's public career spans 65 years. On December 3rd, 2003, the 103rd United States Congress honored her with Public Law 101-162, which reads (in part):

> Dr. Height was a valued consultant on human and civil rights issues to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and she encouraged President Eisenhower to desegregate the Nation's schools and President Johnson to appoint African American women to sub-Cabinet posts.

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[13] Sharp, *Women Civil Rights Leaders*, 37.

> Dr. Height has been President of the National Council of Negro (NCNW) since 1957, a position to which she was appointed upon the retirement of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, one of the most influential African American women in United States history.
>
> The National Council of Negro Women is currently the umbrella organization for 250 local groups and 38 national groups engaged in economic development and women's issues.
>
> Under Dr. Height's leadership, the National Council of Negro Women implemented a number of new and innovative programs and initiatives, including the following:
>
> a. Operation Woman Power, a project to expand business ownership by women and to provide funds for vocational training.
>
> b. Leadership training for African American women in the rural South.
>
> c. The Black Family Reunion, a nationwide annual gathering to encourage, renew, and celebrate the concept of not only the Black family but all families.[14]

Dr. Height has been central in the success of two other influential women's organizations: 1) as president and board member of Delta Sigma Theta, Dr. Height left the sorority more efficient and globally focused with centralized headquarters; and 2) her work with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) led to its integration and more active participation in the Civil Rights Movement. As a member of the "Big Six" Civil Rights leaders — with Whitney Young, A. Phillip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., James Farmer, and Roy Wilkins — Dr. Dorothy Height was the only female at the table when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others made plans for the Civil Rights Movement.

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[14] "Public Law 108–162: An Act to Award a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Dorothy Height in Recognition of Her Many Contributions to the Nation," December 6, 2003, GovInfo, accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-108publ162.

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height received many awards and accolades in recognition of her lifelong commitment to civil rights, women's rights, and social justice. Among her many honors were:

- The Spingarn Award, the NAACP's highest honor for Civil Rights contributions.
- The Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by President Clinton.
- The John F. Kennedy Memorial Award, presented by the National Council of Jewish Women.
- The Ministerial Interfaith Association Award, recognizing over 30 years of contributions to interfaith, interracial, and ecumenical movements for over 30 years,
- The Lovejoy Award, the highest recognition by the Grand Lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the World, for outstanding contributions to human relations.
- The Ladies Home Journal Woman of the Year Award, for her leadership in advancing human rights.
- The William L. Dawson Award, presented by the Congressional Black Caucus for decades of public service to people of color, especially women.
- The Citizens Medal Award, awarded by President Ronald Reagan for distinguished service.
- The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Freedom Medal, awarded by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute.[15]

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[15] "Public Law 108–162."

Legacy in Honor of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height finally retired as president of NCNW in 1997. She continued to fight for justice, training and helping women in the struggle for better housing, improved schooling, and better health care.

Upon Height's death on April 20, 2010, at the age of ninety-eight, former U.S. President Bill Clinton and his wife, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, remarked:

> We are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Dorothy Height, an icon of America's long march toward equality…. Dr. Height helped galvanize a move that changed our country forever. She never stopped fighting for what she knew was right.[16]

The funeral service included members of the National Council of Negro Women, Leadership Team, Cuyahoga County Chapter. The women in attendance all wore white attire and white hats in respect to the passing of Dr. Dorothy I. Height, standing in line for hours to pay their respects, and President Barack Obama delivered her eulogy. The former President, in speaking of Dr. Height's life, commented that she had never cared about getting the credit and often worked behind the scenes while the movement's male leaders earned more attention and fame. "What she cared about," President Obama stated, "was the cause. The cause of justice, the cause of equality, the cause of opportunity, freedom's cause."[17]

> I want to be remembered as someone who used herself and anything she could to work for justice and freedom. I want to be remembered as one who tried."
> Dorothy Height

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[16] Gwen Ifill, "Civil Rights Luminary Dies at 98," *PBS NewsHour*, April 20, 2010, accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/civil-rights-luminary-dorothy-height-dies-at-98.

[17] Ifill, "Civil Rights Luminary."

Summation

In conclusion, this Historical Foundations study deeply explored the life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height. Height was a prominent woman of influence who advocated for social change and served as a role model for Project Hope by advancing the rights of women worldwide. In books, scholarly reports, and historical videos depicting the Civil Rights struggle, it was often her as the only woman present at the Justice table—the sole female representative in the room. In much of the historical footage, Dr. Dorothy I. Height appeared alone as a dignified, educated African-American woman standing up for justice. She lived a full life, with her achievements spreading throughout her lifetime, making a significant impact on those in need.

During her silent years of activism, she was often seen at the table with the Big Six. Dr. Dorothy Height was a true pioneer who made a difference in the lives of women in need. Her diverse experience at the YWCA, along with her volunteer work for the NCNW, supports her role as a motivational example of making a difference for women starting over.

Services Needed

Dr. Dorothy I. Height was a strong educator with community and resources. Former guests of Norma Herr require additional help with Financial Literacy because many have not paid rent and need to learn to pay it on time. As such, professional business volunteers can help by teaching former guests budgeting, writing checks, and/or managing their own financial resources.

Many former guests need furniture, household items, refrigerators, and stoves to move into their new apartments. When calculating moving expenses, many do not have a

bed to sleep in when moving out. Faith-based partners can assist guests with a bed or an air mattress so they do not have to sleep on the floor. Some guests have furniture in storage, and the aftercare support required to get it out is always a challenge for a woman moving out.

Newly housed guests seek community support as they continue living outside the shelter every day. They need positive socialization to maintain their sobriety and wellness and take care of themselves. Some would like to go to church but will need transportation support, such as a church van or a bus ticket.

Newly housed guests also seek to reunite with their families because, throughout their homeless journey, many were disconnected from them and want to be reunited now that they can take care of themselves. Height's legacy of the Black Family Reunion was a demonstration of love, family, and commitment to racial uplift. Dorothy Height explained the origins of the National Black Family Reunion, stating, "Our inspiration was a PBS documentary by Bill Moyers, 'The Vanishing Black Family.

Dorothy Height, NCNW, and the National Black Family Reunion provide a blueprint for addressing contemporary concerns about Black families and communities. The National Black Family Reunions reveal and demonstrate love and commitment. At the core of the NCNW and its decades of service is love, which motivates and continues to motivate the NCNW's work to strengthen Black families and communities. Their efforts, in fact, reflect a reclamation of love, family, and community. As a Ugandan proverb states, "A loving heart does not fail to help." Here, it is the love the NCNW has had, and continues to have, for Black families and communities that spurred them into action. To this end, strong families are the foundation of strong communities, and strong

communities lead to a strong racial group. The NCNW's National Black Family Reunion, then, drew upon this African American tradition to commemorate a half-century of service as well as to demonstrate "the promise of family restoration as a fundamental strategy for overcoming Black poverty and underachievement."[18]

Dr. Dorothy I. Height imparted a lot to encourage women to be self-sufficient and to take care of their own families. In the Civil Rights Era, she found her endurance in helping others and never sought credit for herself. Height never married nor had children of her own, but advocated for the rights of others. The legacy of Dr. Height can still be shared with this new generation of homeless, jobless women, who are currently starting over with new housing after leaving the shelter. The lifelong work of Dr. Dorothy Height should be applauded for the challenge of making a difference for the next generation.

The torch Dr. Height lit is still being passed on to employees at the YWCA, who empower women to advocate for eliminating racism and lead the way toward social change for women's self-sufficiency.[19]

In preparation for Project Hope, a Lunch and Learn was held at the YWCA Administration building for the staff to learn about this significant role model for Women's History Month in 2025. The professional staff and guests of NHWC were provided an educational opportunity to share about the life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy I. Height and the impact she has had on the YWCA and Women's rights worldwide.

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[18] M. Keith Claybrook Jr., "Dorothy Height, NCNW, and the National Black Family Reunion," *Black Perspectives* (blog), AAIHS, March 19, 2025, accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.aaihs.org/dorothy-height-ncnw-and-the-national-black-family-reunion/.

[19] "Lunch & Learn: Tribute to Dr. Dorothy I. Height Birthday Celebration," YWCA of Greater Cleveland, March 2025 (presentation).

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This Theological Foundations Chapter analyzes a theological theme in Black Theology and Liberation Theology, with the premise that when the Leadership team is educated about how important they are to homeless women who come to the shelter, they will begin to value their role in supporting participants on this road to start again. As many applying to the YWCA do not know the work that lies ahead, these workshops were designed for self-reflection and inventory of the work to be a Servant Leader, allowing them to reflect the nature of serving "the least of these"[1]

When women are supported, they can independently care for themselves and not repeat the cycle of recidivism of returning to residing in homeless shelters. It is important for human restoration, healing, and holistic care that homeless, oppressed women be nurtured, educated, encouraged, and edified.

The systematic theological themes explored were Black Theology and Liberation Theology. Both are supportive of restoration and maintaining stabilization of housing for homeless women during a time of crisis. Project Hope was a six-to eight-week opportunity to educate and build relationships with Faith Partners and local businesses that can be a vital resource for women newly housed and transitioning back into the

[1] Gary R. Collins, Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 720.

community. Project Hope provided emotional wellness (Mind, Body, and Soul) to help maintain sustainability so that the women do not return to shelter living. Project Hope will equip them with educational tools to aid them in times of crisis.

This study focused on theoretical practices and the practical support needed for women transitioning from homelessness to self-sufficiency. This chapter reflects on the biblical and systematic approaches of Black Theology and Liberation Theology. After outlining the theoretical practices, the discussion explains the support of partnership for Project Hope, highlighting restoration, community partnership, and healing as potential supports to maintain independent housing for newly housed women in transition to permanent housing.

The first question raised is: What are Black Theology and Liberation Theology? Liberation Theology is a theological approach that emphasizes the liberation of the oppressed. According to Alister E. McGrath, "Black theology is the movement, especially significant in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, which concerned itself with ensuring that the realities of the Black experience were represented at the theological level."[2]

Liberation Theology engages in socioeconomic concern for the poor and political liberation for oppressed people and addresses other perceived inequalities. Liberation Theology is a Christian theological approach emphasizing the liberation of the oppressed. The term "liberation theology" could, in theory, be applied to any theology that is addressed to or deals with oppressive situations. Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the founders

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[2] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 117.

of Liberation Theology and a key proponent of God's preferential concern for the poor, calls the Church into deep communion with the Divine expressed through a free and loving accompaniment of those who have been devalued.[3] As McGrath said:

> It is suggested that practical directions from the church's discipleship amid food and clothing networks, describing the deepening of its roots in the company of the Lord and its resilient neighbors and the widening of its witness to the god who redeems the lessor and the widening of its witness to the God who redeems the lessor and all creation from death.[4]

Black theology and liberation theology became evident theoretical bases, as Project hope was motivated by themes of restoration, community, healing, and the deliverance of women as they started over with re-entry into the community, clearly rooted in concern for the liberation of the oppressed. Womanist Theology was also considered, given its focus on women's theology and women's rights, particularly related to women starting over and the restoration of women from a homeless shelter; the focus would have aptly included Womanist or Feminist Theology. However, Womanist Theology centers on African American women, which limits the audience to one group of women; similarly, Feminist Theology is inclusive of white women from various backgrounds, but it may alienate African American women. It was important to keep the target audience aligned with the principles of liberation for the oppressed—women who are housed and starting over—the relationship with Faith Partners, and support for spiritual formation to guide their transition to self-sufficiency and housing.

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[3] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 119.

[4] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 121.

The mission of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland is dedicated to "eliminating racism, empowering women, and ending homelessness."[5] The Norma Herr Women's Center is under the leadership of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. The empowerment of women is strengthened with values of hope, justice, and everyday freedoms. It is important to note that since February 2025, the YWCA has focused on the brand line "On a Mission!" The YWCA Greater Cleveland is dedicated to building community, empowerment, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.[6] Thus Black Theology and Liberation Theology were most suited for this project.

Black Theology, which emerged during the Civil Rights Movement, continues to impact the world and the church today. Black Theology, with proponents such as James H. Cone, and Womanist Theology, with Renita Weems, related to the mission of Project Hope.

In their *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume Two: 1980-1992,* James Cone and Gayraud Wilmore speak of:

> …a process of reflecting upon God's involvement in human life. Although academic discipline, it is also the way a person appropriates faith, love, and obedience. Theology in this sense is the work of the whole church and the individual members of every congregation. Without question, preaching is one of the mightiest tools of the Black Church for expressing our theology.
>
> To do theology means to make an effort to understand, declare, and live out who God is, what God demands, and what God is doing now for our salvation. Then in the light of that theology, that is the theology, which is knowledge of ourselves, God, and the world, we must respond in faith, love, and obedience.[7]

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[5] YWCA of Greater Cleveland, "Leadership," accessed February 27, 2025, https://www.ywcaofcleveland.org.

[6] YWCA of Greater Cleveland, *YWCA Mission Statement.*

[7] James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Theology as Liberation Theology," in *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, ed. Larry G. Murphy (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 389–413.

In researching the theological theories of Black Theology and Liberation Theology, both approaches have focused on the "liberation of the oppressed." In our society, someone could classify the oppressed or the downtrodden, the ones suffering from mental health issues, the addicts on the street, the women in a domestic violence situation, and a woman who is a prostitute and is oppressed by society today. Many women who are oppressed were freed from incarceration and now have blemishes on their records and cannot find affordable housing.

Many of the women who are homeless and starting over again can identify with this need of Liberation Theology. Many have experienced trauma throughout their homeless experience, and it affects their self-esteem about whether they will be able to successfully maintain being stabilized in independent housing.

Today, chronically homeless women face mental health challenges. As they cope with various traumatic life events, they are often stereotyped as being ignorant, lacking self-care, or insignificant. Many traumatic experiences—such as losing income, being widowed, domestic violence, sexual and mental abuse, depression, prostitution, or substance abuse—have contributed to their homelessness. Many women feel hopeless in daily survival and doubt their ability to succeed; therefore, their self-esteem may be so low that they believe they cannot live independently. Many of these women are forgotten by their families and churches, leaving the government to care for them.

Vision for Community Partnership with Faith Partners

At the time of this writing, many government programs are being removed under the current political administration. In advocating for the importance of Faith Partners

and community businesses as support for the oppressed, the Old Testament scripture Isaiah 61:1-5 grounds the adequatemy theological stance. Isaiah 61:1-5 states:

> The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because, the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted,, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of Vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

This Old Testament scripture paved the way for the theological development and motivation for Project Hope, and further shaped and developed the biblical scripture found in Matthew 25:37-40, reflecting New Testament hope for the "least of these:"

> [37] Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
> [40] The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matt. 25:37-40)

This biblical support has shaped Project Hope's theology of the universal church being the church while people are in homeless shelters.

The oppressed homeless and incarcerated women with mental illnesses often repeat patterns if they do not have resources in place to support them. Gwyn Smith-Ingley stated:

> It is a scene repeated all too often in our jails across the country. A person with a mental illness is arrested, booked, incarcerated, awaits sentencing, and eventually becomes sentenced. For these individuals to have any chance of successful reentry into the community, income support, housing, and treatment are necessary services that must be readily available upon their release to the community. Without such immediate access, recidivism is likely. When individuals are released on weekends, in the middle of the night, or without adequate planning,

> the likelihood of re-arrest, re-incarceration, and re-homelessness increases at a greater rate.[8]

Homelessness is a growing social problem in America today. The fastest-growing segment of the homeless population is families, specifically single women with children. One solution to the hypothesis is for Faith Partners and Civic Organizations to develop a wrap-around services link for homeless women who need guidance and spiritual support. When the women of Norma Herr Women's Center transition from homelessness to independent housing, they are assigned a Housing Stabilization Specialist. The Housing Stabilization Specialist role is assigned for a period of six months to a year after moving out to aid former guests in their transition to stabilized housing. The Housing Stabilization Specialist manages a caseload of up to 50 newly housed women who have transitioned from Norma Herr Women's Center, received keys, and are placed in permanent housing. This case manager is the last staff member to see them during this transition to permanent housing. Some women do very well, are grateful for the experience, and want to live independently with little support. Other After Care homeless women need phone calls to monitor their stabilization in housing, ensure their rent and utilities are paid, and provide community support for issues that may arise.

With the freedom to move into public housing, significant issues await former guests. Many women who are chronically homeless have not maintained employment for over a year. Some have not maintained a budget or paid bills on time due to living in homeless situations. Many women have lost custody of their children and are seeking

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[8] Gwyn Smith-Ingley, "Mental Illnesses and Recidivism: Executive Director's Remarks," *American Jails*, September/October 2010, 4.

reunification upon being released and eligible for public housing. Sacks, McKendrick, and Pearson et al. reported:

> Some of the Housing Stabilization goals: facilitates re-entry into the community at large, assists with self-management of all factors related to homelessness prevention, with special emphasis on peer support, focuses on daily review a 17-point Self-Management Checklist maintained by the mother as tool to help her track the relevant issues related to parenting, work, housing stabilization, and extension of the support network. Building a Supportive Community goal is to facilitate the assimilation in the community of peers, to strengthen the individual's perception of community as a nurturing entity, enhancing the capacity of the community to teach and heal and to promote affiliation with the extended, community based "family" of mothers and single individuals with a recovery fellowship.[9]

The findings in this chapter suggest that a transitional structure and process model provides the necessary framework to move families from homelessness to stability. As Susan Warner said:

> This model incorporates the structural factor of stable housing with the individualized or relational factors of community support for single parenting necessary to move families toward stability and self-sufficiency.
>
> Implications for social policy are addressed in view of the changes occurring in the current welfare system. Many of the difficulties surrounding homeless families and their move to self-sufficiency are due to a lack of either structural or individual support. A better understanding of the needs of homeless women and children provides a basis for the development of more comprehensive policies.[10]

Securing Stabilization for Independent Housing

Many programs exist to support women reentering society after incarceration and homelessness. Significant attention is focused on factors that might reduce the risk of

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[9] Stanley Sacks et al., "Outcomes from a Therapeutic Community for Homeless Addicted Mothers and Their Children," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 31 (2004): 313–338.

[10] Susan Colleen Warner, "Families in Transition: A Study of Housing, Support, and Self-sufficiency" (PhD diss., University of Akron, 2000), 45, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

recidivism and should, therefore, be included in these programs. Stable housing is a crucial element of successful reentry efforts. Many women, whether homeless or incarcerated, rely on government programs for housing stability. A wealth of research documents the barriers faced by offenders, including difficulties with housing and finding employment. Many women, faced with rejection and denied positive alternatives to start fresh, may find themselves reverting to the same behaviors that led to homelessness, "and/or back to a life of crime that results in recidivism, homelessness, or incarceration."

It is important to share the value of Faith Partnership in reflecting God's missional assignment to the church. Christ Van Wyk addresses the question "whether the church is doing enough positive reports of involvement with the poor?'[11] In an article entitled, "God's Missional People: Reflecting God's Love In the Midst of Suffering And Affliction," Van Wyk states:

> I am not talking about some misguided doctrine of prosperity, but a simpler economic reality. If we take poverty seriously, then we take dismantling it seriously. Addressing poverty means going beyond the hand-out, the soup kitchen, and the extra blanket and journeying with people as they build (or rebuild) their lives.[12]

There is also biblical support for our need to care for our neighbor. Jesus teaches his disciples with a parable in this New Testament scripture found in the gospel of Luke, 10:25-37:

> On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked

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[11] F. J. van Hancke, "God's Missional People: Reflecting God's Love in the Midst of Suffering and Affliction," *Acta Theologica* 32, no. 15 (2012): 89–105.

[12] van Hancke, "God's Missional People," 105.

> Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"[37] The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-27)

Go and Do Likewise - Biblical Support for Faith Partnership

This biblical text supports the New Testament parable, which bears many life lessons. It emphasizes the importance of taking care of our neighbors, which informs this purpose as a Community Faith Partnership. This denotes that, when people are being restored to the community, they must be extended "mercy" to as a second chance to start over, an example of practicing the model of Christian Theology, which allows one to "Go Do Likewise." This also allows believers to do something for someone else who is hurting and/or in need.

The text of the Parable of the Good Samaritan allows one to evaluate whether they are the Levite, the Priest, or the Good Samaritan. Upon reading this scripture, Faith Partners in the community were asked: "Are you the priest who saw the man on the way to Jericho and just went across the street to the other side? Or are you the Levite who saw the man and went across the way to the other side? Or are you the Samaritan who stopped as he was traveling, came to where the man was, bandaged his wounds, poured oil and wine on him, took financial care of his lodging, and paid an innkeeper to take care of him?" It is all these probing questions that encourage us to "Go and do likewise."

Many church leaders, sorority and fraternity representatives, and women in ministry want help and provide assistance to the least of these. When they inquire, it is because of mercy. They want to make a difference in the lives of newly empowered women. It is important for the Leadership to develop outreach to people with a Kingdom mission and who want to make a difference, and to have mercy on someone who is starting over.

Many church supporters are not quite ready to come into a homeless shelter, but are more than willing to do a one-shot deal by assisting with a gift card for groceries or a bus ticket for someone who needs support for transportation. Now that the former homeless individual is housed, they want to seek employment. Having mercy on them means providing them with interview clothing or casual attire, now that they have obtained employment and seek to continue stabilizing their housing.

Truly, knowledge is power. Educating the Leadership Team through workshops on teambuilding, critical thinking, spiritual enrichment, and crisis management helps them build a resource toolbox. When a crisis arises, they will consider positive options or know they have networks within reach that can help the women residing in the shelter and early learning center. Although Christian professionals have never stepped foot into a homeless shelter, they would readily volunteer for a pro bono opportunity to teach a budgeting class, encourage someone to save money, learn to invest, or open a checking account. Many women who are starting over have transportation issues and need help to get to recovery meetings and or church services. Some Faith Partners would like to contribute to the needs of Uber services, Lift, bus transportation, or pick them up.

Practical Support for Project Hope

Project Hope was an opportunity for a win-win: giving back to the Faith Partner and the formerly homeless woman. Many times, empowered homeless women want to share their testimony and or speak life to another woman on the journey and to tell her that she can make it, and overcome the cycle of chronic homelessness. They may not have the resources to give back *financially*, but it is important to reach back and help another woman on the journey. Many homeless women can mentor women who want to be successful in their transition.

Another practical part of Project Hope was the customized binder with local resources, from 911 and other local pantries, that can be supportive of them. Since the pandemic, many churches have formalized food bank drives and internal pantries to meet the needs of those in need. The church community is also a Faith Partner in keeping up with the guests and offers the socialization that many of the women need. In church, they can meet people and fellowship with those who care and are concerned about them. This information shared with the Leadership Team was a valuable resource of support for the women who are residing at NHWC.

Healing

Liberation theology is the point at which the healing process begins, when someone is restored to the community and living independently. Testimonies of the liberated women demonstrate their gratitude for the experience of receiving keys, cooking their dinner, and having leftovers for another meal on another day. Some of the homeless women want to move right away and forget all about their homeless journey. It is a liberating and empowering experience to see someone excited to get their new

apartment keys. It is also a joy to witness women begin to creatively plan for domestic living, decorate their homes, seek furniture, and not have the errors of their past come to take this independence away from them. Many of the women of Norma Herr Women's Center have been on the waiting list as chronically homeless people for one to three years at the shelter. Living in a trauma-informed environment can also affect self-esteem and convince one that they are not worthy of a second chance or a new opportunity to live independently on their own. Thus, it is important for the women to stay encouraged, as some may self-sabotage the opportunity by not attending housing meetings or signing the necessary paperwork to be assigned to public affordable housing. The result is that they remain in shelter for additional years.

Many women who are in a homeless shelter are not looking for housing but are still seeking a place to call "home." There was a stage production of *The Wiz*[13] featuring Stephanie Mills, depicting the classic story with Judy Garland as Dorothy, spending time with her beautiful ruby red slippers and trying to find her way back home. As we know, she meets the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and a Cowardly Lion as they ease on down the road to see the Wizard. Throughout the entire play, Dorothy realizes that "Power is Within Her." Although she reflects on her journey, Dorothy sings a song titled "Home."[14] The song lyrics begin with "When I think of home, I think of a place where there is love overflowing."

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[13] *The Wiz: The Super Soul Musical "Wonderful Wizard of Oz,"* is a groundbreaking 1975 Broadway musical that reimagines l. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* through the lens of African American culture, music, and urban life.

[14] Charles Smalls, "Home," *The Wiz: Original Broadway Cast Recording,* with Stephanie Mills, Immersive Music/Interscope, 1978, streaming audio.

Empowerment and prayer are keys to educating and encouraging people for their next opportunity to achieve independent living. Over the years, pouring on God's loving-kindness draws them to experience God's healing power. As Faith Partners who pour into them and encourage them to be successful. During this contemplative time, the healing process of God's love leads them to want to return to church or to recommit to their relationship with the God of their understanding. Many times, those former guests who are in recovery find themselves embracing a fellowship — whether it be Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Cocaine Anonymous — it is a fellowship where they continue to have socialization and supportive care from people who understand and know their journey. It is important for the healing process to be in a community that embraces them because many begin to miss and long for the community in the homeless shelter. By supporting clear boundaries, the newly housed women are not encouraged to return to the shelter once they are permanently housed. Some women transition from shelter, get what they need for that season of their life, and vow that they will never return to shelter living.

As newly housed homeless guests continue to settle into their new housing, the therapeutic healing presence of God takes place. The continued liberation of their heart and soul is encouraged to do new things, to seek support in the creative arts or creative expression. God stirred up gifts within them, and now they are free to soar toward greatness. The outward expression of liberation is expressed in the creative expression of praise dance, gospel music, rap music, poetry, journaling, jazz music, classical music, sewing, gardening, painting, and jewelry making. Many of these therapeutic expressions contribute to the healing process of what is now being done to celebrate being home.

In the reprise of the song from *The Wiz,* the song "Home," written by Charlie Smalls and performed by Stephanie Mills, there is a contemplative verse in conversation with God. The song lyrics state:

> If you are listening, God, please don't make it hard to know,
> If we should believe the things that we see
> Tell us, should we run away, should we try and stay?
> Or is it better just to let things be?
> Living here in this brand-new world might be a fantasy
> But it's taught me to love so it's real, real to me
> And I've learned that we must look inside our hearts to find
> A world full of love, like yours and mine
> Like home.[15]

It is during this time the theology of God's love allows for spiritual formation to take place, allowing homeless women to appreciate the journey of the transition from homelessness to being stabilized in permanent, affordable housing.

Conclusion

This study demanded critical thinking and sound doctrine to the theological themes of restoration, community, healing, and deliverance in meeting the supportive needs of women in transition. As such, Project Hope made an impact on the people who are housed and then leave the Norma Herr Women's Center. In networking with churches and Faith Partners to offer a unique opportunity for authentic sharing of the mission of God's love. One of the responsibilities of the local church is for missional outreach to "the least of these." Some true people in the world want to touch the hearts of God's people by offering their time, talents, and treasures to aid in the transformation and support of newly housed women in transition.

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[15] Smalls, "Home."

This research supports that "the motive behind God's mission is love."[16] Therefore, as participants in God's mission, the church cannot and should not act out of any other motive. God's people should not be driven by the needs of others but by the faith and love of Christ, because only from this inner source can sustainable transformation be born and nourished. Such understanding is illustrated by Mother Teresa's statement, "Many people mistake our work for our vocation. This vocation is the love of God. When God's people discover the missional privilege to reflect God's love in the midst of suffering and affliction, then the church will truly become a living sacrament of His love for the world in desperate need."[17]

The theology of Liberation for the oppressed is a tenet that many faith traditions support and exemplify in their local churches and civic organizations. The Divine Nine in Greek fraternities and sororities have a call to service to humanity, which encourages service projects to help women in transition. The theme of restoration is being restored in a community with the freedom to live independently and take care of themselves.

A member of the National Council of Negro Women, where Mary McCloud-Bethune and Dorothy Height were the founders, it has allowed an opportunity to network with professional women who have an impact in politics and society and to be effective in the lives of women and children. This civic organization promotes the liberation of the oppressed through the tenets of scholarly education and service to humanity. In networking with Sabrina Hayes, of the Cuyahoga County Chapter of the National

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[16] van Hanske, "God's Missional People," 105.

[17] van Hanske, "God's Missional People," 105.

Council of Negro Women. She has expressed a desire to connect and support Project Hope to meet the needs of housed women transitioning into public housing.

Spiritual formation[18] is not an abstract concept but a transformative process that flourishes when genuine love and kindness are extended to those in need. It is in these acts of compassion that individuals encounter the profound love of God, a love that transcends superficial gestures and manifests as a tangible force that can renew lives. This journey of spiritual formation becomes particularly poignant when addressing the needs of homeless women transitioning into stability. Through intentional support and unwavering encouragement, these women can begin to recognize their inherent worth and embrace the possibilities of a restored life.

In the context of ministry, the challenge lies in aligning one's calling with the practical realities of advocating for marginalized communities. Despite societal misconceptions about homelessness, this research underscores the truth that homeless individuals do not choose their plight; rather, they often find themselves overwhelmed by circumstances that demand a complete reset of their lives. Recognizing this, the ministry of outreach becomes a sacred duty to extend God’s grace and empower these women to escape the tumult of their past and step into a future filled with hope.

Project Hope exemplified this principle, creating spaces where spiritual formation intertwines with practical assistance. The Encouragement Sessions offered not just tools for stability but also moments of reflection and growth. Certificates awarded after these sessions honored the participants’ resilience, while Blessing Bags containing journals, outreach contacts, and bibles served as reminders of a faith-driven journey. These

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[18] Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 821.

initiatives, paired with housing supplies to establish a clean, welcoming new home, demonstrated a commitment to nurturing both the physical and spiritual needs of these women.

Furthermore, the partnerships cultivated through faith communities amplified the impact of this outreach. Organizations like Project Hope become conduits for God's love, spreading seeds of transformation and stability within the lives of women at centers like Norma Herr Women's Center. This collaborative effort not only sought to reduce recidivism but also positioned spiritual formation as a cornerstone for building lives that reflect the transformative power of God's love. It is through such endeavors that divine love becomes a beacon, guiding individuals out of despair and into a space of hope and renewal.

The Leadership team, while attending workshops, better understood the importance of their role in encouraging staff to support participants in moving towards self-sufficiency. It required the staff to have the discipline and critical thinking needed to continue motivating guests every day in their hope of new, affordable housing.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The goal of this interdisciplinary foundations chapter is to analyze a non-church-related field/discipline. Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Theory are interdisciplinary theories analyzed, exploring the rationale behind choices, how they function, and the impact of restoration, healing, and holistic care on oppressed homeless women. When the homeless women are supported and seek professional psychotherapy, they can gain the resources to care for themselves and stop the cycle of recidivism or returning to homeless shelters.

Project Hope hypothesized that educational workshops on servant leadership would equip administration and staff with practical knowledge and strategies to better support their teams. This final project was successfully implemented to foster an environment in which the YWCA of Greater Cleveland's Leadership Team could experience spiritual growth and professional development. The voluntary Empowerment Sessions were designed to provide a structured platform where members of the YWCA Leadership team can share insights and engage in reflective discussions with fellow leaders.

Research in psychology and behavioral science furnishes a greater understanding of the mental health journey of homeless women and of the psychological processes of those suffering from mental health illnesses. The women who are struggling with

homelessness do not want to be stuck in this cycle of struggles. Researching this information led to formulating a methodology for providing services to these women. Teaching workshops in a trauma-informed environment allowed the Leadership to be better equipped to meet the needs of participants who need help during their crisis of homelessness.

Wellness is a key ingredient that motivated the Leadership team and the staff to focus on resilience and on meeting the ongoing needs of the people served at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. One of the workshops presented was on Selfcare vs. Soulcare, and many of the staff shared that they had neglected themselves while caring for so many others in their family and on the job. Conversations were stirred in a training from "Fired up or Burned Out" by Michael Lee Stallard with Carolyn Dewing-Hommes and Jason Pankau.[1] Due to staff shortages at the YWCA, many staff members periodically work extended hours to get the work. It is important to note, however, that the staff cannot pour from an empty pitcher.

During the leadership workshops, there was an intentional time for breathing techniques to support critical thinking for writing shift reports and preparing for emotional conversations with women with mental health issues. Many of the staff have an experiential life of once being homeless and need supportive care for their own mental health. For the significant work that is needed, wellness is essential in meeting the ongoing supportive work of impacting lives at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

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[1] Debra Searle, "The Case for Connection at Work," in *Fire Up: How to Fuel Your Passion and Performance* (London: Profile Books, 2024), 2.

Many people may wonder why a homeless person abandons affordable housing due to traumatic events in their life, just to return to being homeless again. It is tempting to think that society need only provide the homeless with housing, and they will be able to successfully stay there. However, if the person is chronically homeless, this means that they have likely developed habits that interfere with taking care of themselves. Those who have successfully been housed and have not returned to the streets are used to working with social workers, counselors, and ministers who know their mental health condition and have emotionally and psychologically been supportive of them in their times of crisis.

Researching psychology provided this project with an evidence-based approach to supportive interventions that can be developed to help people cope with mental health concerns and prevent homelessness. Many homeless women suffer in silence with anxiety and need professional guidance to help them navigate the next steps toward finding housing. These interventions can help them avoid housing loss and can encourage them to seek hope so they can live successfully on their own.

This chapter examines the fields of psychology and behavioral science because the mind matters. Many homeless people can feel overwhelmed by the process and just want to give up and abandon their housing and dreams of having their own independent space. Introducing psychotherapy[2] and educating a person to understand and unpack what leads to homelessness can provide hope, encouraging them to develop behavior modification, live a better life, and maintain a self-sufficient home.[3]

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[2] Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 36.

[3] Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 97.

Cognitive Behavioral Theory is a framework that emphasizes the link between an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and how these interact to influence their overall well-being and quality of life. It suggests that one's thoughts and interpretations of situations significantly impact one's emotions and actions. Mind and Psychology tools explain that this theory is the foundation of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), a talking therapy that aims to identify and change unhelpful thought patterns and behaviors.

CBT has established itself as the dominant force in Western psychotherapy. It has been identified as the treatment of choice by a range of health agencies, such as the UK National Institute of Excellence (NICE), for many of the most common forms of psychological distress. In the United Kingdom and elsewhere, training in CBT has greatly expanded efforts to increase public access to this evidence-based therapy.[4] In a recent study, Michael Worrell described CBT this way:

> In vitro techniques of CBT have been used to teach clients skills and provide them opportunities to rehearse. Meichenbaum (1993) purported to help clients handle stress 30 differently, through "inoculation," thereby reducing stress-related symptoms. His work was reviewed by Poser (1989), who agreed with Meichenbaum in his conclusions. Meichenbaum also believed that Cognitive Behavioral modification should integrate narrative construction in its "guiding metaphors."[5]

This study specifically focuses on psychology as an interdisciplinary theory for women in transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Psychology is defined as the branch of psychology focused on the study, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders, aiming to promote change in individuals

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[4] Michael Worrell, *CBT and Existential Psychology: Philosophy, Psychology and Therapy* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 38-40.

[5] Worrell, *CBT and Existential Psychology*, 45.

through observation and experimentation. It involves directly working with patients in clinical settings to understand and address their issues.

When certain spiritual practices are blended with practical therapeutic approaches and secular moral disciplines and practiced in ministry settings, spiritual transformation can happen. Lives can be changed in both the short and long term when the method used to meet the needs of homeless women and their children is holistic.

This study uses CBT with evidence-based approaches to intervene and care for women who are struggling with mental health concerns affecting the stability of their home. Figure 1 below depicts the cycle of research: developing, refining, and disseminating CBT.[6]

[6] Sarah Rakovshik, *An Introduction to CBT Research* (London: UK, SAGE, 2019), 1-3.

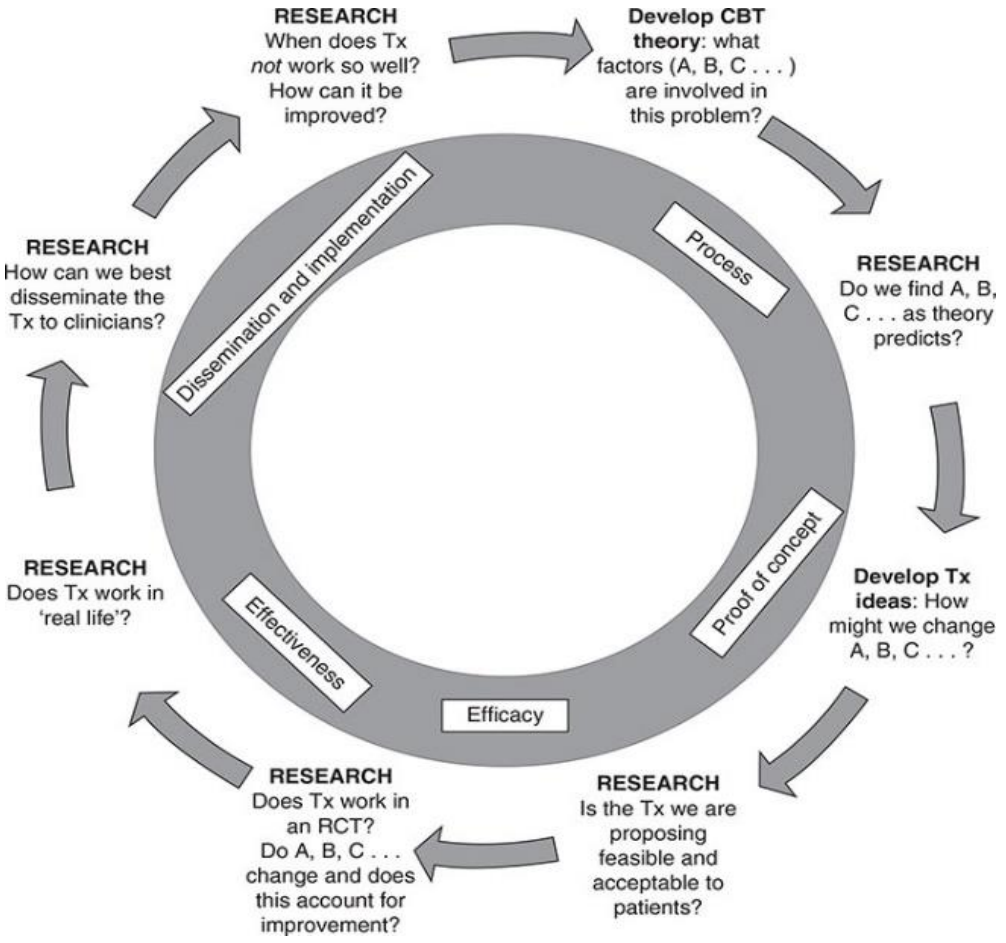
RESEARCH
When does Tx *not* work so well? How can it be improved?
Develop CBT **theory**: what factors (A, B, C . . .) are involved in this problem?
RESEARCH
Do we find A, B, C . . . as theory predicts?
Develop Tx **ideas**: How might we change A, B, C . . . ?
RESEARCH
Is the Tx we are proposing feasible and acceptable to patients?
RESEARCH
Does Tx work in an RCT? Do A, B, C . . . change and does this account for improvement?
RESEARCH
Does Tx work in 'real life'?
RESEARCH
How can we best disseminate the Tx to clinicians?
Dissemination and implementation
Process
Proof of concept
Efficacy
Effectiveness

Figure 1. The Cycle of Research: Developing, Refining, and Disseminating

After outlining the significance of CBT, it is important to understand how the intersections of the biblical, historical, and theological foundation chapters support one another, providing a strong foundation for Project Hope. This interdisciplinary foundation paper is an asset to understanding the mind's impact on the problem of homelessness.

Research findings on CBT and psychotherapy underscore the importance of using evidence-based practices in psychotherapy. The research added to a body of work that could ultimately join the list of evidence-based practices identified by organizations, such as the American Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association, the National Institute of Health, and other esteemed

organizations in the medical and health service industry. The history and use of expressive arts in therapy, CBT, stress research, mood research, and quality-of-life research all fit into a larger picture. That larger picture refers to how people perceive their life situations, how that perception affects their lives, and is a contributing factor in mood disturbances and, as a result, their quality of life suffers.[7]

Art therapy, music therapy, journaling, sewing, poetry, creative expression, rap music, and praise dancing are opportunities offered to the women who are a part of Project Hope, the next level that will be inclusive of reaching the needs of the participants serveed at NHWC. Creative expression is also a manifestation of healing for their soul. This project focused on the support of partnership for Project Hope, the next level, featuring restoration, community partnership, and holistic healing as supports needed to maintain independent housing for women in transition to permanent housing.

In support of Faith Partner collaboration, Emo Zhao's research revealed:

> Homeless people are at elevated risk of suffering from hunger and poor health, and lack access to education, clean water, and sanitation, all of which contribute to rising inequalities and prevention of social sustainability. Solving the issues related to homelessness is not just the responsibility of the healthcare or food provision sectors, but rather is the responsibility of society as a whole. Policy makers, social managers, and the public should all work together to provide assistance to homeless people through coordinated efforts.8

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[7] Suzanne Andry Botello, "An Exploratory Comparative Study of a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, an Art Intervention, and No Treatment on Mood, Stress, and Quality of Life in Adult Women" (PhD diss., Northern Arizona University, 2015), 111-13.

[8] Emo Zhao, "The Key Factors Contributing to the Persistence of Homelessness," *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology* 30, no. 1 (2022): 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2022.2120109/.

Intersections with the Biblical Foundations Paper

This study's biblical foundations paper exegeted Matthew 25:31-46, specifically the passage about the sheep and the goats. In this New Testament passage, God's people are given the responsibility to take care of the least of these. Regarding the support of Faith Partners, phase two of Project Hope's reintegration focused on assisting guests to move out of the provided homes and into their own. For former homeless women to be successful in living independently, there is still a need to have holistic services to get assistance with behavior modification.

Strong biblical support for Project Hope is found in Romans 12:2, where Paul says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing, and perfect will." Renewal is important for the mind, body, and soul. It is the spirit that gives life to us in taking care of our mental and physical bodies. In the HR Department, People & Culture, it is important for the staff to be trained on their own wellness. Similarly, the Culture Coach conducts monthly Wellness Checks with staff to assess their well-being, requiring personal questions about their well-being or investigating circumstances that require follow-up for soul care. It can also follow up from concerns of grief, domestic violence, or even drug usage. The YWCA partners with EAP (Employee Assisted Program) with Moore Counseling and Mediation Services, Inc., for professional mental health services for all staff.

When former homeless guests move into a new house, it is a chance to start over with new living skills regarding money management and ultimately remove themselves from the practices and patterns that caused them to be homeless in the first place.

For renewal in the mind, it is also important to follow up with the mental health services available to you. Former guests have shared that when they move out, they must face the anxiety of loneliness, depression, and self-esteem issues that go along with independent living. Women who are in recovery are starting over, and one of the tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous is that they must let go of people, places, and things. In support of this tenet, they develop new behaviors that promote healthy boundaries from the people who abused them. Former guests no longer need to go to places where they used drugs and exhibited unhealthy behavior. They must remove themselves from the temporary pleasures that caused them a lifetime of regret and distraction on their personal journey.

In an interview with Donna Bolton, the supervisor of the crisis intervention team at Norma Herr Women's Center, Bolton shared:

> The mind is a terrible thing to waste. When I was homeless and on drugs, I realized that my mind was being messed up every day because of my drug usage. I learned when I followed the steps of recovery and sought the God of my understanding. I was formerly homeless, and I attributed success to making it on my own, maintaining my steps to recovery, and also following the 12 steps of sobriety and making shifts in my life to renew my mind every day. I had to be accountable to others, share my testimony, and work on steps to be a healthier person. It was not easy, but I had to renew my mind and learn new positive behaviors to build up her self-esteem so that she could make it and be stabilized in independent housing.[9]

Today, Donna Bolton has celebrated twenty-five years of sobriety, employed as a supervisor at Norma Herr Women's Center — the place where she was once homeless — and has lived in her home in Cleveland for twenty-four years.

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[9] Donna Bolton, interview by author, Cleveland, OH, December 13, 2024.

Ministering the gospel reveals that we are human beings who need to be nurtured in mind, body, and soul. In a recent scholarly journal on homeless people starting over, the author argued that it is important to include programming and supportive care to prevent them from becoming bored with life. Studies have shown that many chronically homeless women who suffer from mental illness must enact preventative measures to avoid a return to homelessness.

The foundations for Project Hope emphasize that the word of God supports the hearts of God's people with transformation and restoration. In Romans 12:2, "Be ye transformed," captures the essence of women who are starting over with new housing and want to live independently. The transformation must begin in the mind. The supportive care of psychological counseling, combined with CBT interventions, can provide the support and guidance that homeless people need.

During a time of crisis, a person who needs prayer may benefit from the support of a therapist or counselor to encourage and guide them toward wellness until they can navigate complex issues on their own. A pastor, teacher, and counselor must know their limits and when someone is dealing with overwhelming life issues that they cannot solve. They must refer those who need help to the people who can help them. Many things fall outside an individual's scope of services, and therapeutically licensed counsellors are better equipped to advise them. Stress is a part of life, and by attending to it in healthy ways, people can affect other areas of their lives, including mood, which in turn may provide a better quality of life.

Overviews of cognitive and behavioral theories were provided, and a history of how current trends in CBT have developed was presented, indicating that CBT has

evolved and remains an important theoretical orientation. Definitions of mood, stress, and perceived quality of life were provided, and the literature reviewed supported the connections among the three states of being. There is ample evidence that CBT is an empirically sound and efficacious treatment for several mental health issues, including stress management, mood and affect self-regulation, and goal setting, to enhance quality of life. CBT has proven itself repeatedly. Mood, stress, and perceived quality-of-life research were introduced and identified. Studies have shown that people are affected in numerous ways by life experiences. The three universal realities that all people have are the experiences of moods, stress, and the effects of their perceived quality of life. Treatments that can positively affect one will naturally affect the other two. CBT is an efficient and reliable treatment for stress management, mood disturbances, and personal growth. A broad, but thorough review of the art therapy literature has also provided evidence of its efficacy as a therapeutic choice in many situations and with clinical and non-clinical populations.[10]

In addition to decision making, other key psychotherapeutic aspects of genetic counseling include facilitation of effective coping, adaptation, and post-traumatic positive growth. One psychological orientation that supports these counseling goals is CBT. This guiding principle is that there are inherent relationships among our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. What we think affects how we act and reflects how we think and feel. Much of modern psychology is steeped in CBT, and evidence supports its efficacy.[11]

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[10] Botello, "Exploratory Comparative Study," 115.

[11] Frank M. Dattilio, Cognitive-behavioral strategies, in *Brief Therapy with Individuals and Couples*, ed. Jon Carlson and Len Sperry (Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker & Co., 2000), 33–70.

Many CBT-based therapies focus on cognition as the point of intervention to effect change in emotions and/or behavior. Of note, the target is not knowledge, but cognition. This is particularly important when considering the application of CBT to genetic counseling, with its inherent integration of medical education and psychotherapeutic counseling. CBT guides the practitioner to focus not on what the client knows about her genetic condition or risk, but what she thinks or believes, as it is her thoughts that shape her emotional experience.[12]

Intersection with Historical Foundations Paper

The historical foundations paper featured Dr. Dorothy Irene Height, whose lifetime achievement measured the liberation of Black America, the advancement of women's rights, and a determined effort to lift the poor and the powerless. Height began her career as a staff member of the YWCA in New York City, becoming the director of the Center for Racial Justice.

Research on Dorothy Height revealed no findings of mental health or behavioral health concerns in her life. She used her life to make a difference and advocate for the rights of women everywhere to receive benefits, and provided legal advocacy for the rights of women. Dr. Height never had children of her own, but she advocated programs to develop healthy families.

Height is also credited with being the first Black person in the Civil Rights movement to view the problems of equality for women and equality for African

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[12] Barbara Biesecker, Jehannine Austin, and Colleen Caleshu, "Theories for Psychotherapeutic Genetic Counseling: Fuzzy Trace Theory and Behavior Theory," *Journal of Genetic Counseling* 26, no. 1 (2017): 146-148.

Americans as a whole. Height's contributions and attributes in society are reminiscient of a quiet storm, who was often known as the only one in the room still stating her case for the rights of women and children. She was well remembered for this famous quote: "Greatness is not measured by what a man or woman accomplishes, but by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals."[13]

Height's life and impact elicited new insights on the importance of providing meaningful activity to our lives as we practice socialization to maintain and live in our housing. For example, Dr. Dorothy Irene Height advocated for family reunions and gatherings to unify the family and encourage African Americans to take care of themselves. Carrie Anne Marshall, Abrial Cooke, and Julia Holmes argued that:

> Boredom and meaningful activity are important outcomes that require focused attention in services designed to support individuals during and following homelessness. Attention to this construction in future research, practice, and policy has the potential to support the well-being of individuals who experience homelessness and to contribute to efforts aimed at homelessness prevention.[14]

Regarding this theory's relevance to Project Hope, it shapes our understanding of the importance of socialization and its effect on our mental well-being. In addition, Marshall et al. found that:

> Interdisciplinary research with a range of populations suggests that boredom can impose both positive and negative influences on psychosocial well-being. Researchers have demonstrated, for instance, that the presence of boredom can elicit curiosity and creativity, which are seen to be facilitative of mental health. High levels of boredom have been associated with increased engagement in substance use, low self-reported physical and mental health, low motivation, and involvement in criminal activity. While research with clinical populations is

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[13] Savannah Taylor, "Happy Founders Day: 6 Quotes from Notable Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority," *Ebony*, January 13, 2023, https://www.ebony.com/delta-sigma-theta-sorority-notable-members-6-quotes/.

[14] Carrie Anne Marshall et al., "'It's Like Your Days Are Empty and Yet There's Life All around:' A Mixed Methods, Multi-Site Study Exploring Boredom During and Following Homelessness," *PLOS ONE* 19, no. 5 (2024): e0302900, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0302900.

> relatively limited, research with inpatient psychiatric populations suggests that boredom arising from few opportunities to engage in meaningful activity may lead to increased smoking, abscondment, and poorer mental health.[15]

This article reinforces the importance of keeping women focused on and intentional about self-care and in motivating them to engage in encouraging activities, even while they are in a shelter. At Norma Herr Women's Center, there is limited programming, so some of the women return to negative activities and/or situations that allowed them to be homeless in the first place.

Meaningful activities are things we do that bring value to our lives. Carrie Anne Marshall, Abrial Cooke, and Julia Holmes et al. furnished an applicable definition: "all of the everyday things we do in our life roles, but also the things we do to create a meaningful life and to engage with wider society and culture."[16]

Intersection with Theological Foundations Paper

This study's findings on CBT strengthened the framework on Black Liberation Theology. In modern society, the oppressed include those who suffer from mental health challenges, individuals struggling with addiction, women in a domestic violence situation, and women engaged in prostitution—each still facing systems of marginalization and injustice. Many women who are oppressed, for example, were freed from incarceration and now have blemishes on their records and cannot find affordable housing.

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[15] Marshall et al., "Exploring Boredom," 119.

[16] Marshall et al., "Exploring Boredom," 120.

Many homeless women, having faced profound trauma from childhood to adulthood, resonate deeply with the principles of Liberation Theology, which emphasizes dignity, empowerment, and overcoming systemic oppression. These women often struggle with untreated mental health conditions, navigating their lives using the limited coping mechanisms they have developed over time. To foster resilience and self-sufficiency, it becomes crucial that they are supported in maintaining their mental health baseline, whether through consistent medication, access to therapy, or practicing proactive self-care measures. Liberation Theology underscores the importance of addressing the social and personal barriers that hinder their ability to achieve stability, helping them to reclaim a sense of self-worth and agency in their journey toward independent living.

Homeless women suffer from chronic mental health problems and are encouraged to seek professional help regarding their behavioral health. As they deal with various traumatic issues of life, they are often stereotyped as dumb, ignorant, suffering from a lack of well-being, or not considered significant at all. Many traumatic events in their lives have caused them to be homeless: lack of income, being widowed, domestic violence, sexual and mental abuse, depression, prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse. Many women become hopeless in everyday survival and do not believe they can make it. Thus, their self-esteem can appear low when they believe they cannot become self-sufficient and live independently. Many of these women are forgotten by their families and churches and are left for the government to take care of. As such, one of the intersections between the biblical and historical foundations chapters happens when these women first arrive at Norma Herr Women's Center. They are required to take a self-

efficacy test so we can review and assess their need for a mental health provider. Annette Brose, Peter Koval, and Manuel Heinrich et al. stated:

> Studies show that we further promote the conjoint analysis of multiple types of symptom dynamics as well as therapy outcomes in the search for mechanisms of change in psychotherapy. First, the change mechanisms reflected by symptom dynamics, as outlined above, are not operating in isolation. For example, early improvements in depressive symptoms—such as those that may result from an experience of hope and gain in self-efficacy beliefs during early-stage therapy—may co-exist with higher system variability or symptom spikes, potentially indicative of ongoing emotional processing.[17]

Similarly, Emo Zhao said:

> Research has reported that mental health is a key component for women who suffer with chronic homelessness. The research showed that, of the 12 studies included in this report, 8 suggested a correlation between mental health problems and homelessness. We found that regardless of gender or age, people experiencing homelessness often suffer from mental illness, with 42-80% having experienced mental health problems. Mental illness can lead to homelessness, and homelessness can exacerbate psychiatric problems.[18]

It is a positive outcome, as the measurable goals of the self-efficacy survey indicate that homeless women's self-esteem has increased, along with their motivation to seek mental (and physical) health providers.

All of the women who transition and are housed must find employment and have supportive means to take care of themselves. They need to practice healthy life skills by paying their rent, maintaining proper housekeeping, and budgeting their resources to meet their family's needs. The rationale behind these activities is to reduce the recidivism rate for the return to home and reincarnation. Westbrook argued that:

> Recidivism is significantly more common among prisoners who have a mental disorder in addition to a substance abuse problem. Introducing an ex-prisoner to a

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[17] Andreas Brose et al., "Location-Scale Modeling as an Integrative Approach to Symptom Dynamics During Psychotherapy: An Illustration with Depressive Symptoms," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 92, no. 9 (2024): 1-5.

[18] Zhao, "Persistence of Homelessness," 7.

> group of life skills program is an opportunity to help them repair the harm caused by their misconduct. Without intervention and recidivism programs, thousands of individuals who are released without effective post-release care are in danger of exacerbating mental health challenges and re-offending.[19]

It is important to note that at least 10% of the women who arrive at Norma Herr Women's Center have come from correctional facilities, and at the time of re-entry into the community, they had no housing. Supporting their mental health requires access to positive community resources and opportunities for personal growth, so they are not compelled to return to life in a homeless shelter.

Although they are residing in affordable housing, some women are required to pay higher rent and therefore must have some income. Former guests must find job-training programs that will support them with training to go back to work. The women must attend programs to study to become nurses' aides, maintenance workers, data entry clerks, computer repair specialists, childcare assistants, teacher's aides, typists, or receptionists.

Homeless women come from various backgrounds, and with proper support and mental health care, they can go back to work to provide a better income, resulting in stability of life and permanent housing. Working also increases their self-esteem, since they do not have to rely on public assistance and can one day move from an apartment into their own private housing.

Those in recovery need to continue to work on their sobriety and maintain going to their fellowship meetings. Many times, when they are housed, old habits try to come

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[19] Leslie E. Westbrook, "Believe for Change: A Group Life Skills Program for Female Ex-Offenders with Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorder to Help Reduce Recidivism" (PhD diss., Capella University, 2024).

back, and they can return to what they used to do. It is important to maintain an active relationship with their sponsor and home group.

Summation

This interdisciplinary paper analyzed and supported evidence on the biblical, historical, and theological foundations that come together to impact ministry and the lives of homeless women. They are being revived, restored, and renewed to stay housed and improve opportunities for self-sufficiency.

The hypothesis of workshops for the Leadership team is that they are a positive means of supporting staff and the services offered to them to maintain healthy working relationships and make a difference for the people served at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. The spiritual enrichment was welcomed by the staff and positive affirmations certainly inspire and motivate the staff to strive to do better to alleviate stress. Stress reduction and stress management[20] was motivated by rest and breathing techniques to clear their mind, resolve conflicts, and provide resolutions that work for the staff and the participants.

Throughout this study, scholarly journals and testimonies have highlighted the need for interdisciplinary care that incorporates CBT, as well as the importance of socialization and commitment to positive activities. It is also important to provide positive activities so that newly housed guests can deal with their mental health issues using CBT. To reduce the risk of recidivism, newly housed guests must work on their

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[20] Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 777.

self-care goals. Many of them are excited to move back into the community, but struggle when they are faced with a crisis. It is important to motivate former guests to go back to mental health providers to help guide them back to baseline to maintain quality mental health care.

Newly housed guests are encouraged to stay connected with the Housing Stabilization Specialist, who provides aftercare management for up to 50 formerly housed guests. Her role is to start with a weekly wellness check and then progress to a monthly check to ensure that guests are timely in paying their rent and utilities and remain emotionally, financially, and medically stable in their new affordable housing.

The Wellness Checks are a time to conduct a site visit to their home and follow up on any concerns that could affect their living in their permanent housing. It is during that site visit that the case manager can review needs in the home. Does the person have a bed? Do they live alone? How do they take care of the apartment? These questions provide indicators of how the newly housed guest is really doing. The case manager can address concerns that the new house guest may face during the transition and start-over.

The goal is to wean the women off of support and integrate them back into the community, and reduce their dependence on Norma Herr Women's Center, now that they are housed in affordable housing. Aftercare can be provided for up to six months after they move out. Many of the women will use the aftercare services and then are grateful to be independent while not needing support from the Norma Herr Women's Center.

Over the years, numerous success stories of women who have started over and never returned to shelters are motivating. Norma Herr Women's Center constantly reminds women that shelter living is brief, non-recurring, and an option for a set period

of time to help them get back on their feet and move towards self-sufficiency. As the Leadership team attended the workshops and explored more supportive options, Project Hope provided them with a toolbox of professional resources and support to encourage the support staff and make a difference for the women served at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

The journey of rebuilding a life after homelessness is often fraught with challenges, but it also brings opportunities for profound personal growth and transformation. These stories of resilience inspire not only the women themselves but also those who continue to face the trials of shelter living. By uplifting one another, these women create a powerful community of shared experiences and mutual support. This network of encouragement helps to reinforce the importance of hope and determination in overcoming adversity and transitioning to a life of stability and independence.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Project Hope was undertaken as a Final Project for the Doctoral Program at the United Theological Seminary, facilitated by Denise Cunningham-Doggett, M.Div. It was developed and implemented as an opportunity to train the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. The facilitator focused on four modules of engagement to foster a genuine commitment to the call for servant leadership, along with team building and professional development. The issue at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland is that many leaders have struggled to maintain hope in a challenging ministry environment aimed at eliminating racism, empowering women, and addressing homelessness.

The YWCA Leadership Team has addressed challenges arising from the pandemic's aftermath and political issues, noting that administration and staff have lacked training to meet these demands. Project Hope hypothesized that educational workshops on servant leadership have provided administration and staff with useful knowledge and methods to better support their teams. This final project was successfully completed to create an environment in which the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland could experience spiritual growth and professional encouragement. The voluntary Empowerment Sessions were created as a structured forum for members of the YWCA

Leadership team to share insights and engage in reflective discussions with fellow leaders.

This intentional, dedicated process aimed to inspire the Leadership Team with hope and purposeful professional guidance over seven weeks during the summer. It served as an opportunity to foster team building and motivate a leadership group working in a Trauma-Informed environment. Project Hope was a powerful "toolbox" resource created to energize the leadership team with motivation and a call to action to make an impact across the agency in working with women and children.

Throughout the four semesters at United Theological Seminary, the scholarly focus reflected the four achievement modules aimed at ministering to the hearts of the Leadership Team at the YWCA. The four foundational models are 1) The Biblical Foundation, 2) The Historical Foundation, 3) The Theological Foundation, and 4) The Interdisciplinary Foundation. The Biblical Foundational scripture was Matthew 25:46-51, it was designed to fully guide the teaching and empowerment of the Leadership team at the YWCA to meet the ongoing needs of the “least of these”.

The marketplace ministry of The YWCA of Greater Cleveland is a non-profit organization that is the context in which Project Hope was implemented and collaborated with the HR Department. This organization is not part of the local church, so the facilitator intentionally partnered with a community agency that reflects her core values for social change. The language of the Biblical Foundation to meet the needs of this marketplace ministry. Project Hope also provided an opportunity to educate and encouraged the Leadership Team on all four foundational models.

Through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, the scope of Project Hope was carefully refined to maximize its long-term impact. Instead of a direct, short-term intervention with the transient homeless population, the project adopted a capacity-building approach focused on professional staff. This shift recognizes that the most effective way to serve the vulnerable women and children of the YWCA is to ensure their caregivers are spiritually resilient and professionally prepared. By investing in the 'servant leaders' who support homeless families daily, Project Hope created a sustainable ecosystem of care that ultimately benefits the guests more effectively. The initial scriptures were Matthew 25:42-45, emphasizing the need to meet the needs of the least of these. In preparation for the Leadership Team for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, the Biblical Foundation scripture was changed to Isaiah 40:28-31 (New International Version).

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.**29** He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.**30** Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;**31** but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.

This scripture of Hope aimed to motivate the Leadership Team and encourage those who serve and care for others daily. The Biblical Foundation scripture was created to help leaders develop endurance as Servant Leaders, enabling them to reach new heights and make a difference in the lives of women and children at Norma Herr Women Center, Independence Place, and Cogswell Hall. The professional staff worked in a

trauma-informed environment, where ongoing emotional support, including spiritual enrichment, is essential.

Module #2, the Historical Foundation, provided an opportunity to research and study someone relevant to the Final Project. Since the YWCA has a 150-year history, it was important to teach life lessons from the civil rights era and to reflect on the life and legacy of Dr. Dorothy I. Height. In this second module, the facilitator focused on social justice. It was a wonderful chance for the Leadership Team to share their personal history, faith journey of endurance, and reasons for doing the work they do today.

Many members of the Leadership Team shared reflections about their ancestors and families who lived through the Civil Rights era. The facilitator discussed and shared scriptures that resonated with perseverance and struggle. During the Empowerment Session, the Leadership Team talked about fair housing, voting rights, and the opportunities people have today that some take for granted. The session concluded with a group project of making protest signs and singing protest songs of endurance, such as "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round, Turn Me Round, Turn Me Round, Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round Walking Up the Freedom Land."

In Module #3 the discussion now focused on faith and freedom. The Leadership Team discussed the Theological Foundation, which provided an opportunity to share their personal faith stories about what keeps them grounded during challenging times in the marketplace. Each Empowerment Session offered a chance for spiritual devotion, meditation, inspirational music, and reflective conversation. The Leadership team was encouraged to address difficult issues of endurance in the marketplace. Deep water issues included moments when people wanted to give up, and the work felt overwhelming.

Project Hope was a meaningful time for the Leadership Team to focus on re-examining the hope that encourages them to work at the YWCA. This session included an encouraging message on "What Anchors You, in Times Like These?" with a group activity centered around an "Anchor." This allowed the leadership team to reflect on what gives them staying power in the marketplace. It was a very empowering session, as each Leadership member created their own anchor to take back to their office as a symbol of stability. The Empowerment Session concluded with a song of encouragement, "My Soul is Anchored in the Lord," by Douglass Miller.

In the final Empowerment Session, Module #4, the focus was on the Interdisciplinary Foundation, integrated with psychology and breathing techniques for stress reduction. This ministry operates in a trauma-informed environment where women and children stay throughout the day. Project Hope provided an opportunity to combine the science of psychology and cognitive-behavioral therapy with spiritual enrichment through mindfulness and stress-reduction breathing techniques, serving as a therapeutic resource for the Leadership Team. Since this Empowerment Session took place at the end of summer, it offered a great chance for engagement by the Leadership Team and created a strong platform to prepare for the next season of Empowerment Sessions with the Human Resource Department.

Methodology

The data for Project Hope was gathered using three separate collection methods: professional interviews with members of the executive team of the Leadership Team, electronic surveys, and written questionnaires completed during the Empowerment

Sessions. The professional interviews focused on the 4 modules and on their perceptions of the spiritual enrichment of the Empowerment Sessions. All surveys and questionnaires remained confidential in compliance with the Informed Consent form that each Leadership Team member signed to participate in the voluntary Empowerment Session.

Questionnaires #1 and #2

Due to trust issues, some staff were reluctant to participate in written surveys, fearing that others could identify their personal comments and concerns. As sessions progressed, the leadership team became more engaged in completing Questionnaires #1 and #2.

Collecting data via electronic surveys was an immediate response and kept anonymous from the Leadership Team. Many leaders would openly share their learning experiences, but out of 14 leaders, only 50% responded to the surveys because they were accessible on their phones or computers, took about 10 minutes, and could be done electronically. Although the leaders were responsive to the surveys, completing them was not mandatory.

The Leadership Team appreciated the questionnaires, which enabled them to share their perspectives on the Final Project. Many team members preferred to complete the questionnaire during their group session. This was important because the facilitator took time to follow up throughout the week to send reminders to the staff to complete the questionnaire for the final project. After the first week, the facilitator took the initiative to allow the last 10 minutes of the session for the staff to complete the questionnaires. After this process, the return rate was 80% of the forms were completed on the same day.

The participants for this Final Project were selected from a closed group to reorganize the Leadership Meetings and restart them publicly. Since there were new management hires and the team had not gathered in person since the pandemic, this was necessary. The Leadership Team included paid full-time professionals from various departments of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland and also included managers with leadership responsibilities within the agency. The Empowerment Sessions were scheduled a month ahead of time, and Leadership Team members received invitations to attend the Summer Empowerment Series, which covered HR Hiring Practices and Procedures and Voluntary Spiritual Enrichment for the Leadership Team.

In Marketplace Ministry, professional standards had to be maintained to ensure everyone could participate in the final project. The Empowerment Sessions were voluntary, so after the first part of the HR training sessions, there was always a deliberate break to let those who did not want to participate choose to return to their departments or attend other professional meetings needing their attention. Attendance was recorded at each Empowerment Session, with an average of 10 to 12 participants per session. After the break, two people could not attend the entire session due to scheduled vacations during the summer Empowerment Sessions. They requested notes and access to session videos for anything they missed.

During a professional interview, Helen Forbes Fields, CEO and Executive Director of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, attended the initial HR Training and Empowerment workshop focused on wellness. She remarked, "I am committed to supporting all forms of employee training that contribute positively to growth,

development, and workplace enhancement." “It is important for staff to invest time in themselves to better serve the population we serve at the YWCA.”

In a Professional interview with Denise Coats, VP of Administration and People in Culture for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, she stated The Empowerment sessions were attended on a voluntary basis with spiritual enrichment. Many staff were eager to learn about the four foundational modules taught at United Theological Seminary. Coats reflected, “I had the privilege of observing the transformation that took place not only in our staff but also in our collective organization because of this training series.”

Throughout the seven-week course, participants engaged in guided discussions designed as intentional dialogues to deepen mutual understanding and respect, as well as to promote teambuilding across the organization. Structured conversations fostered relationship-building, challenge assumptions, and create opportunities for genuine dialogue. During the Empowerment Session on Fantastic Voyage, the Leadership Team completed weekly electronic surveys about the content presented during the Human Resource Training by Candace M. Price, HR Generalist. The Empowerment session gave participants an opportunity to explore the underlying reasons that motivate their commitment to the mission and work of the YWCA. During the initial questionnaire, the Leadership Team's responses were limited due to uncertainty about the intended audience and the interpretation of their input.

Since this Final Project took place during the summer months, the facilitator created a lively atmosphere by announcing that the Empowerment Sessions would be part of a themed cruise called “The Fantastic Voyage,” inspired by the song “Fantastic Voyage” by the urban band Lakeside. One way to make a difference was to ensure that

the sessions would not be just ordinary meetings in a typical corporate setting. Instead, since it was a nautical-themed gathering on a cruise ship each week, participants 'visited' a different port of call to engage the Leadership Team. The People and Culture Team dressed in nautical attire for each session to remind staff that they would set sail on time, allowing the sessions to start promptly and end at designated times.

The Empowerment Sessions started at 11:30 am with boarding, and by 11:45 am, participants traveled to the first port of call, the Bahamas, for training. Each week featured a different port of call where staff who had traveled abroad briefly shared their travel experiences. This fostered team building and served as icebreakers, helping staff get to know each other better and develop stronger team connections. The staff members were beginning to become more engaged in the meetings and wanted to stay longer for spiritual enrichment.

Carnival Music served as an effective transitional element, attracting those seeking spiritual growth in the marketplace. The facilitator handed out meditations, songs, scriptures, and motivational professional books to inspire attendees. Intentional homework assignments were also provided so participants could get their passport signed and stamped each week, progressing from one week to the next.

Each Empowerment Session discussed the support of being “ANCHORED IN HOPE”, with spiritual insight from the scripture in Isaiah 40:28-31. The focus of this scripture says, “Even the youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” During this time, meditations, music, readings, uplifting videos, and encouraging messages were

shared for individuals and YWCA staff across departments. The central message was present in each empowerment session.

One key component that was effective in fostering change with the participants on the Leadership Team was the power of prayer. Public prayer being welcomed in the marketplace was appreciated by many people. The facilitator ended each session by inviting staff to share prayer concerns. At first, there was only one prayer concern. For 6–8 weeks, staff could email concerns to the facilitator or note them during sessions. However, as the weeks went on, staff became very open to sharing their prayer requests for both work and home.

Why did you choose to do your final project in this way?

In semester one, the facilitator wanted to focus on Marketplace Ministry because of her personal investment of 33 years of working with the indigent population was important to validate the ministry of servanthood to the least of these. The opportunity to encourage and pour back into the lives of professional servant leaders was valuable. During each Empowerment Session, it was rewarding to see the Leadership Team strengthen their connection for the benefit of our guests and agency. (See Project Hope Invite, Appendix B).

The opportunity to complete the Final Project within the facilitator's ministry, where she was employed full-time, allowed reflection on the faith journey and demonstration of transparency during a particularly vulnerable period of academic pursuits. The facilitator's constant prayer is, "God send me where you need me to serve." It does not come with instructions or what, when, or how to do it. Yet, it is reassuring to know that He has promised to always be with us during this journey.

The final format of this project enabled the facilitator to be sensitive to the culture and to make an impact on the prayer life of the YWCA administration—to support the hypothesis: knowledge is power. Although numerous non-profit organizations provide training, including spiritual enrichment as an elective part of the summer program, this makes it unique. Although this was not the original project plan, everything comes together for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.

Implementation– The YWCA is on a Mission

Project Hope was conducted through a seven-week class held on Tuesday mornings from July 7, 2025, to August 19, 2025, at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, Lower Level, 4019 Prospect, Cleveland, OH. The theme of the Leadership Voyage was "Anchorages in Purpose, Sailing Towards Impact with Spiritual Enrichment, “Anchored in Hope.'" The closed group session was invite-only for the Leadership Team training. The team included 14–16 members, primarily African American women aged 31 to 64, along with two Caucasian women, one African American man, and one Caucasian man. Educational backgrounds ranged from high school to undergraduate, master's, PhD, doctoral level, and attorney at law.

The Marketplace Ministry training was initially planned by the HR Team. Denise Coats, VP of Administration, HR Director, was encouraged to provide a new proposal for the People and Culture Team. Spiritual enrichment was a new addition to the curriculum to be an encouragement to the Leadership Team. This was a trial to see if the staff would welcome spiritual encouragement in the Marketplace.

Spiritual enrichment is often mentioned among staff during private conversations, yet there is little recognition for openly praying or sharing one's faith with colleagues from varied backgrounds. It was important to keep the leadership of Project Hope Guidance from a doctoral student who could assist them in handling challenges. questions or concerns. The staff member is Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett, Culture Coach, partnered with HR to lead spiritual empowerment sessions in support of the

Leadership Team. The professional associates included in this project were Rev. Dr. Robin E. Hedgeman, graduate of United Theological Seminary, Senior Pastor of Bethany Christian Church, Pastor of Rev. Denise, Rev. Dr. Benjamin Franklin, graduate of Ashland Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Wanda Coleman, graduate of Ashland Theological Seminary, and Dr. Adriennie Hatten, Ph.D.

These professional associates were essential to the DMin project, providing leadership, guidance, insight, and support. As the project progressed and began to take shape, they provided consistent spiritual encouragement through prayer, regular check-ins, and by serving as trusted sounding boards throughout the journey. The professional associates were prayer partners and coaches to the facilitator, with guidance and support along the way.

Module #1 – Foundation of Learning to Work Better Together/Wellness

Three implementation processes were teaching business professional workshops, with the inclusion of gospel and inspirational music and therapeutic guided meditations. The introductory. Empowerment session was to lay the foundation for the importance of Self-Care vs. Soul Care. Wellness for the Leadership Team Introduction of Balance: Self-

care vs. Soul care (Scripture: 3) John 1:2: Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you, and you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans that I have you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you to provide you with hope and a future.

As a leader, you must take care of yourself. You cannot pour into everyone else without making time for your own well-being. The demands of working for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland can be tempting, but it's important to stay aware of what's happening in your life (see attached outline). The core message was to learn and accept the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. The workshop was designed for the leadership team to share their personal journeys and what they needed to do to work on themselves. The group divided into triads to decide on their wellness goals for the summer. They also committed to returning to something they had been neglecting in their personal soul care—whether that's going back to church, reading a book, gardening, sewing, playing musical instruments, walking, running, swimming, jogging, following up on medical appointments, or eating healthier, more nutritious meals.

In the Introduction session, it was important to teach wellness and help participants find their grounding or centering, which allowed them to balance work, home, and personal health and strength. Each Leadership tram member took a personal inventory of what they needed to do to take better care of themselves. Below is the handout the facilitator used to teach the 8 dimensions of wellness. It was the first open discussion where staff could verbally share what they need to do differently. Eight out of 10 staff identified areas that they needed supportive care in wellness.

What do you do for wellness:

1. Self-care
2. Soul care

The Mission Statement is to eliminate racism and end homelessness.

The Brand for the YWCA is "We Are on a Mission!"

What does that mean to you?

Do you believe that this training will be helpful to you?

It was important to build trust during the introduction to Wellness to discover what your "Y" is. The leadership team includes employees ranging from newly hired staff to those who have been with the agency for 10 years. It was essential to have time to share why they believe that God called them to Leadership at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. Each module in the teaching workshops included scriptural content, meditation, discussion, a group project to work on, and concluded with a time of prayer.

The Leadership Team was given a syllabus outlining the upcoming weeks during the summer, along with a Passport that would be signed upon arrival at each scheduled event (See attached Appendix C).

Module #2 – Historical Foundation – Civil Rights Era and Tribute to Dr. Dorothy I. Height. These are the handouts that were used in the Empowerment Session

In Module #2, the Leadership Team were getting to know each other better and becoming more engaged in each topic. Some staff members were excited to have their passports signed weekly for completing homework and for gaining more personal insight and understanding of the mission of the YWCA.

Journal Writing Assignment #1 – Historical Foundation Tribute to Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Dorothy I. Height

Scripture: Psalms: 137:4: "How can you sing the Lord's song in a strange land."

Quote from Dr. Dorothy I, Height:

What do you remember or reflect upon today that stays with you from the Civil Rights Era?

The civil rights movement was a social movement in the United States from 1954 to 1968 that aimed to abolish legalized racial segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement in the country, which most commonly affected African Americans. The movement had origins in the Reconstruction era in the late 19th century, and modern roots in the 1940s. After years of nonviolent protests and civil disobedience campaigns, the civil rights movement achieved many of its legislative goals in the 1960s, during which it secured new protections in federal law for the civil rights of all Americans.

1. What would your protest sign say in the 1950's? Why?

Many staff took the time to write create and make protest signs; One African American male wrote words of, "Education over Ignorance." The Leadership team created protest sings with the language: "Fair Housing!", "No Justice, No Pesce", "I am Fighting for Freedom.", "No weapon form against me!", "I need a job, now!" and No Justice, No Peace!"

2. Participants were asked to conceptualize a modern-day protest sign relevant to their current leadership context.

The Leadership Team engaged in an activity where they created personal protest signs relevant to the current era. Protest Songs used in the Civil Rights training:

"Eyes on the Prize", "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round", "I Woke Up this Morning with my Mind Stayed on Freedom." and "We Shall Overcome"

3. While working at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, how do you support social justice?

    Tribute to Dr. Dorothy I. Height

    Who is Dr. Dorothy I. Height?

    Video Clip in Tribute to Dr. Dorothy I. Heights

    2 Handouts in Tribute to life and Legacy / Celebrating her works at the YWCA.

(See attached Appendix F)

Celebrating Women – The Life and Legacy of Dr. Dorothy I. Height Racial Justice Leader at YWCA

"We have to improve life, not just for those who have the most skills and those who know how to manipulate the system. But also, for and with those who often have so much to give but never get the opportunity. – Dorothy Height

After her first job as a social worker in Harlem, Dorothy started working at YWCA Harlem in 1937. Over the next 40 years, she advanced within YWCA's national organization. During her time there, she helped push YWCA to take an active role in the Civil Rights Movement by serving as a sponsor of the 1963 March on Washington. She advocated for ending YWCA's practice of holding separate conferences for Black leaders and White leaders, and she traveled across the country to assist local chapters in adopting the organization's interracial charter. In 1965, she was named National Director of the

Center for Racial Justice and worked tirelessly within YWCA to desegregate every level of the organization.

Dorothy was a 25-year-old assistant director at the YWCA in Harlem when then First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and National Council of Negro Women founder Mary McLeod Bethune paid a visit. Dorothy was assigned the job of greeting and escorting the first lady, but a conversation with Mary, the daughter of formerly enslaved people, altered the course of Dorothy's life. She was inspired to begin working with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Mary's significant influence on Dorothy was evident throughout her life, and the two maintained a life-long friendship.

For all her efforts during the Civil Rights Movement, Dorothy was awarded and recognized by many organizations. In 1989, she received the Citizens Medal Award from President Ronald Reagan, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1994, and in 2004, Height was honored with the Congressional Gold Medal. The same year, Dorothy was inducted into the Democracy Hall of Fame International. She also received an estimated 36 honorary degrees.

On April 20th, 2010, Dorothy Height passed away at the age of 98. President Barack Obama delivered her eulogy during her funeral at Washington National Cathedral.

"I want to be remembered as someone who used herself and anything she could touch to work for justice and freedom. I want to be remembered as one who tried." – Dorothy Height

Leadership Team Analysis: 10 out of 10 appreciated the social justice education with video footage of Protest Marchers. Many had experience; some did not receive this

education in school. But I truly appreciated learning more about social justice not just in Black History month.

Participants were assigned a journaling exercise for the subsequent session on August 5, 2025.

Journal Writing Assignment #2 – Historical Foundation

1. Who is your personal favorite, or mentor in the Civil Rights Era or with Social Justice? Why?
2. What is the change in society that you would like to see happen in this season of time?
3. What is your motivational song? Or your Song of Encouragement that motivates you on the journey.

   "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round"

   Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round

   Turn Me Round

   Turn Me Round

   Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round

   I'm Gonna Keep on Walking, Keep on Talking, Walking on the King's Highway"

   "I Woke with My Mind Stayed on Freedom"

   I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Freedom

   I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Freedom

   I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Freedom

   Hall-la-lu Hall-la-lu Hall-la-lu-jah

Walking and Talking with my Mind stayed on Freedom (3 times)

Singing and praying with the mind stayed on Freedom (3 times)

Module #3 – Theological Foundation: What does it mean to be a servant leader:

Scripture: Micah:6:8 "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Dorothy Height Quote: Greatness is not measured by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals.

The Leadership Team bonded over their discoveries of personal connections related to advocacy in the workplace. This training module focused on our belief system and what it takes to be a servant leader. The third module tested their resilience to do the work they are called to do at the YWCA. The leadership team had to address deep water issues and challenging questions in the marketplace to ensure staff remain committed to the true purpose of journaling. This information was shared in the Encouragement Session on Servant Leadership.

Journal Writing Assignment #1 – Deep Water Issues

Date: August 5, 2025

Project Hope for the YWCA Leadership Team: Servant Leadership

Facilitator: Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett

Doctoral Student, United Theological Seminary

Scripture: Isaiah 40:28-31: Servant Leadership

"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.

You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." Quote: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Review of Previous Assignments: The session opened with a review of the previous week's reflection questions, including identifying role models from the Civil Rights Movement and personal songs of motivation.

1 Who is a role model from the Civil Rights Movement?

2, Or what is your song of motivation?

3, Some staff created their own protest sign, if you did not. What would your protest sign say today?

4, What is Servant Leadership?

5Who do we serve at the YWCA?

4. What do you believe your "Y" is for the work that you do? What is your testimony?
5. Being a leader, can conflict come with conflicts? How do you handle conflicts when you are struggling with a member of the Leadership Team?
6. While working for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland what keeps you anchored in doing this type of work during challenging times?

For the 'Anchor Activity,' participants were instructed to write a single word or phrase that sustains them as leaders at the YWCA. They were allotted seven minutes to complete this reflection.

Word of Encouragement: Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett

Closing Meditation for Endurance

Final Summer Session: Tuesday, August 19, 2025

You are invited to come dressed in Tropical attire on our last port of call on the Fantastic Voyage.

Last Focus Group Session: "Breathe"/ Interdisciplinary Foundation with Mindfulness Stress Reduction

Professional Empowerment Books: John Maxwell and Stephen R. Covey[1]

Professional Guidance recommended through Moore Counseling and Meditation Services

Recommended Reading for going through the Storms of Life:

"A Sacred Storm", When God Speaks through Radical Disruption, Author: Rev. Dr. Christopher Michael Jones[2]

"If you want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat.", Author: John Ortberg[3]

Daily Readings from Crushing / 90 Devotions to Reveal How God Turns Pressure into Power - TD Jakes[4]

Song of Encouragement "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord" Written by: Douglass Miller

Though the storms keep on raging in my life

And sometimes it's hard to tell my night from day

---

[1] Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989),

[2] Christopher Michael Jones, *A Sacred Storm: When God Speaks through Radical Disruption* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2024),

[3] John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001)

[4] T. D. Jakes, *Crushing: God Turns Pressure into Power* (New York: FaithWords, 2019).

Still that hope that lies within is reassured

As I keep my eyes upon the distant shore;

I know He'll lead me safely to that

Blessed place He has prepared

But if the storms don't cease

And if the wind keeps on blowing, (in my life)

My soul has been anchored in the Lord

I realize that sometimes in this life

You're gonna be tossed by the waves

And the currents that seem so fierce

But in the word of God I've got an anchor;

And it keeps me steadfast and unmovable

Despite the tide

But if the storms don't cease

But in case the wind keeps on blowing, (in my life)

My soul has been anchored in the Lord

My soul has been anchored in the Lord

My soul's been anchored

My soul's been anchored

My soul's been anchored

Billows may roll

The breakers may dash

I shall not way because

He holds me fast

So dark the day

Clouds in the sky

I know it’s alright

Because Jesus is Nigh

My Soul Has Been Anchored

Leadership Team Analysis: This Empowerment Session was met with contemplative, reassuring stares. Group engagement was powerful for creative expression as you independently made your own wooden anchor, with a focus on why you stay when you want to quit.

Module #4 – Interdisciplinary Foundation Training Session – Breathe

Scripture: Romans 12:2 ; Psalm 150

In the final Empowerment Session of the Fantastic Voyage of HR Training, it was entirely dedicated to the Interdisciplinary Foundation on Stress Reduction to be Supportive of the entire Leadership Team. This session was very well attended because it was the last session, and many of the staff wanted to go on the final journey together as a

team. This Interdisciplinary workshop was designed to pour back into the staff, show support for the importance of critical thinking, and celebrate the intentional efforts toward growth and development for the Empowerment sessions.

Since the YWCA has departments that work with trauma-informed care, Norma Herr Women's Center (Homeless Shelter), Independence Place, Nia, Children's Program, and Cogswell Hall all serve residents who have experienced traumatic events, leading them to these facilities. The Leadership Team enjoyed a donated salad buffet focused on providing a healthy meal for everyone. The session emphasized mindfulness in how we communicate and handle situations in our various leadership roles. How do we professionally respond to participants and staff during a crisis? This interdisciplinary workshop combined psychology science with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques, including mindfulness and instrumental flute music, to enhance grounding in the room.

Leadership Team Analysis: 14 out of 14 appreciated the Meditative environment to focus and retreat on personal issues of the day. The facilitator incorporated guided imagery along with scripture reading and also taught rhythmic breathing techniques to help participants manage everyday conflicts.

Summary of Learning

The Leadership Team shared their responses in short narrative responses on questionnaires #1 and #2 that were provided to them. These are the responses from 13 staff who shared responses that affirmed their spiritual connection to the work that they do at the YWCA. Many of the Leadership Team members were motivated to share more in the Empowerment Sessions because they were getting to know each other better.

The Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire results from the Leadership Team in Project Hope. (See Appendix D & Appendix E for Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire). In the Pre-Questionnaire, some staff were reserved in responding because they were unsure about confidentiality and verbally expressed this during the time they were responding to the questionnaires. Upon being informed of the confidentiality of the questionnaires, participants were encouraged to express their concerns candidly. In comparison of responses on the Questionnaires the Leadership team was responsive to sharing the need for the Empowerment Session and were encouraged to share prayer concerns and journal readings during each session. During these 7 week Empowerment Sessions the staff shared core values that aligned with the mission of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

Results and Findings

Ten out of fourteen responded that they appreciated the Empowerment Sessions and would be encouraged to participate in the spiritual empowerment workshops again when they are offered. At the start of summer, 10% of the Leadership members were worried about who would read their comments on the questionnaires. The responses were kept confidential and collected solely for the Final Hope Project. It is true, "Trust is earned, not given." The two questionnaires offered space for the staff to explore what their "Y" is and to reflect more on why they were drawn to work for the YWCA.

Two out of the fourteen needed more clarity to determine if they were doing their jobs correctly and if they were honest enough to admit they needed more training to

support the people reporting to them. After each session, many members of the leadership team left personal notes, saying, “This was just what I needed.”

The leadership team responded positively to the Empowerment Sessions, actively completed the questionnaires, and provided input on future training topics. Eight out of ten Leadership participants suggested that all the workshops should be mandatory to understand the culture of the agency. It was unanimous that all the participants of the Leadership team affirmed the training received in the Empowerment Session hosted by the HR Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. Each week that the staff attended the teaching sessions, they were given an opportunity to be encouraged, trained, and shared motivational readings and words of encouragement from the Word of God.

Marketplace Ministry is not the local church. Project Hope allowed an opportunity to bring creativity to blending business and professional support for the staff, who appreciated the intentional time to pray and timely scriptures and gospel music that ministered to their hearts and souls. This served as a wonderful opportunity to learn and meet many of the staff members and evaluate the gifts and talents that work for the agency. Professionally, it was an opportunity to network and get to know the Leadership team. In Marketplace ministry, our pulpits are not just in local churches, but every place that our feet trod, there is an opportunity to share the good news about the love of God.

Staff recalled the presence of God during preparation for the Empowerment Sessions. It was a creative moment to design the boat each week for the gathering at each meeting. The details included Sight, Sound, and Motion. The nautical decorations provided comfort to each staff member present. Every week, different seashells adorned the tables with a centerpiece to focus on during the time of meditation, and information

about the port of call of the week was used to encourage further conversation. Each meditation featured candlelight, water, or gentle breezes to create an ocean-like atmosphere.

As a facilitator, Project Hope allowed a creative opportunity to share and blend drama with professional role plays, art, and music as the facilitator engaged in the encouragement of Hope to the Leadership Team, and was also a healing environment for the issues of life. The Leadership Team left with a homework assignment to challenge them with what they had learned from each module that was featured for each session. As a professional musician, it allowed an opportunity for was intentional to use secular music and gospel music that was well received, As we set sail to cruise, played urban soul with “Fantastic Voyage”, by R& B Artist, Lakeside, Wellness session, song included: “Sailing” by Christopher Cross, Journaling session, “God is Preparing Me”, by Daryl Coley, Protest Songs, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round, “My Soul is Anchored in the Lord”, by Douglass Miller and Instrumental Praise with flute and keyboard with Min. Cerena Mangum.

Music was a motivational force coupled with devotional readings to build confidence with the team and inclusive by sharing spiritual books for meditation each week. Books were placed on the table and brochures to educate them about other helpful resources that were available to them in the work environment. It also provided an opportunity to include prayer journals and meditation books for those interested. Throughout the time of the workshops, local volunteers were encouraged to participate in final sessions to be an encouragement to the Leadership Team to serve them for being front-line responders. So grateful to have Speak Life Ministries, a parachurch ministry,

came to serve the staff at the Leadership staff luncheon. It was a great teachable moment for them to partner with their pastor in the marketplace and serve God's people outside the local church. They often help the homeless, but this was their first time serving the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

There was a strong educational component, but since the last Empowerment Session was in place, there was time to have fun while learning. The Leadership team participated in a tropical photo shoot, and they really got into it. They came dressed in tropical attire and left with fun door prizes and donated prayer pillows to take home. This entire summer was truly a Fantastic Voyage to be used by God for His service.

God confirmed the scripture Romans 8:28, "that all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." God had a purpose and plan to use this project to further encourage and edify the Leadership Team at the YWCA. Working in a non-profit agency is demanding, but it is essential for the staff to operate as equipped and prepared to be the best servant leaders.

This study required adaptation to be creative in teaching and inspiring the leadership team, alongside requiring the body to be in balance by meeting the need for rest. The project also required preparation for early setbacks when working with a team. Working with Marketplace Ministry is not like a traditional local church, but rather requires one to give people time to gradually understand what is being shared. Marketplace Ministry has a unique culture where one can blend inspiring teaching to share the good news.

The hypothesis of Project Hope was that if administration and staff participate in educational workshops on servant leadership, they will be better equipped with both

information and methodologies they can use to inspire the staff that serve the people.

After reviewing the responses from the leadership team in the attached questionnaire,

Table 6.1 – Leadership Team Empowerment Sessions: Feedback & Recommendations

Module / Topic	**Number of Staff**	**Participant Comments, Insights, & Recommendations**
Foundation (Wellness/Mission)	2	Appreciated the foundational teaching on Wellness and the YWCA Mission.
Historical Foundation	3	Found it engaging and valued the civil rights insights. "It was encouraging to learn the history of the Civil War, I did not grow up learning this history. Very informative session".
Firm Foundation	5	Truly appreciated this module, specifically noting that it provided much-needed support for moments when they felt like quitting.
Interdisciplinary Foundation	4	Loved the music and meditation used for stress reduction. "It was amazing to have meditation time focused on the Leadership team in the marketplace".
All Modules	2	Found all modules motivating and appreciated the professional support. Recommended these sessions be included in continued training.
Recommendation: Program Expansion (Year-Round)	General	It was noted that the HR Series of Empowerment Sessions could be inclusive throughout the entire year, rather than just in the summertime.
Recommendation: Mandatory Training	8	Eight out of ten participants suggested that all workshops should be mandatory to understand the agency culture. It was also suggested that Leadership Team leaders be required to take the HR Series with Empowerment Sessions.

Recommendation: Tech & Accessibility	1	One negative note regarding Microsoft TEAMS. A staff member found it challenging to participate virtually during teambuilding segments. It was suggested that future sessions be videotaped so absent staff do not miss out.
Recommendation: Scheduling & Logistics	~3 (20%)	Noted that holding sessions during lunch sometimes left staff without enough time to eat and arrive on time. Suggested communicating workshop schedules earlier to accommodate summer vacations.

Over the seven weeks during the summer, it was a blessing to see increased engagement from the Leadership Team after each Empowerment Session.

Negative response to consider for future sessions

The staff of 14 leaders, 20% shared a leadership staff survey noted that because sessions were held during lunch, staff sometimes lacked enough time to eat and arrive on time at for each session. The sessions were held during the summer months, and some leadership had planned vacations and did not want to miss an Empowerment Session, so staff shared that the HR department needed to communicate workshops earlier to be inclusive of all of the Leadership. The evaluation forms indicated that it was recommended for all Leadership members to attend Empowerment Sessions.

It was exciting to hear them share what they learned, and they did not want to be absent from any Empowerment Sessions. After reviewing the surveys, the facilitator coordinated with local vendors and scheduled a Salad Buffet at the end of the session to celebrate the Leadership Team's participation in the HR Training and Empowerment Sessions, which included spiritual enrichment.

Conclusion

The final project's aim was to test the hypothesis, provide participant experience, and inform future research to enhance spiritual formation from the local church to the marketplace ministry. Engaging in the deliberative work of introspection, assessment, development, implementation, reflection, and spiritual discipline throughout the project sharpened the insight into the needs of the project context, as well as the needs of doing the greater work that Jesus promised that we could do. The problem statement at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland is that many leaders have struggled to maintain hope in a ministry context that aims to eliminate racism, empower women, and end homelessness.

This intentional, dedicated process was designed to inspire the Leadership Team with hope and targeted professional guidance over seven weeks during the summer months. It offered an opportunity for professional team building and encouragement to a leadership team working in a Trauma-Informed environment. Project Hope was a powerful “toolbox” created to motivate the leadership team and inspire a call to action to make a positive impact across the agency by working together more effectively.

The YWCA’s need and capability, as evidenced by this project, is to incorporate spiritual enrichment and workshops to encourage and make an impact on the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. Project Hope sought to address the key hypothesis that educational workshops on servant leadership will equip administrators and staff with practical knowledge and strategies to better support their teams. This final project was successfully implemented to foster an environment in which the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland could experience spiritual growth and professional development. The voluntary Empowerment Sessions were designed to

provide a structured platform for members of the YWCA Leadership team to learn and engage in reflective discussions with fellow leaders. The Empowerment Sessions facilitated by Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett included wellness, rest, evaluation of personal goals, self-discovery of purpose, and resilience in what keeps them stable and anchored to serve 'the least of these.'

In a letter of endorsement by Denise Coats, VP of Administration (Appendix H), she has reflected a positive response from the addition of the voluntary Empowerment Sessions, which were a motivational addition to the HR Training for the Leadership team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

Each foundational chapter served as a pillar on which the project was built. By purposefully incorporating the academic insights from the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary chapters into the project's execution, the research was linked directly to practical ministry experiences. It enabled theory to truly inform practice. The project originally intended to work directly with the homeless, but after consulting with the IRB, God orchestrated a different plan that was meaningful for the Leadership and the facilitator. After reviewing the methodologies of surveys, questionnaires, and professional staff interviews with the Leadership Team throughout the seven weeks of the summer, Fantastic Voyage was certainly a positive addition to learning and engagement with the Leadership Team at the YWCA. As each Empowerment Session ended, the Leadership team would meditate intentionally on the personal goals of walking out their purpose in working for the YWCA.

The workshops yielded positive results, prompting the Leadership Team to inquire about the scheduling of future Empowerment sessions. Project Hope provided an

opportunity to blend the spiritual gifts of teaching and praying for the Leadership team. It also facilitated the professional blending of talents to creatively change the atmosphere, like a boat, motivating people to participate in the workshops. Every leader who trusted the facilitator with their evaluations and concern for each confidential matter during each session was greatly encouraging. Professional associates were the cheerleaders who galvanized the project with resources for spiritual enrichment suitable for this context of ministry.

Contextual associations provided essential support for the project's endurance, as professional approaches were necessary to reach the hearts of God's people, with diversity shaping and developing spiritual formation. However, as discussed in chapter four, many believers were encouraged in their prayer life and motivated to read the professional resources shared during the Empowerment Sessions. One participant expressed that this was an awakening experience for them in the marketplace. The Leadership Team gave positive feedback about the workshops in their written evaluations. Project Hope demonstrated that the Leadership team were strengthened by the workshops on educational approaches to prayer and spiritual formation.

Future opportunities of Project Hope, the Next Level, teaching and sharing with the community for further outreach to share and care for 'the least of these' by volunteering and donating resources. Many shared that the Empowerment sessions should be mandatory so that everyone on the leadership team can experience the workshops and training. This doctoral project was a pilot to address ongoing needs related to transitions in non-profit administration at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

One additional new finding that have taken place since the Leadership workshops is that the facilitator has been assigned a new opportunity through People and Culture to introduce a weekly motivational word of encouragement titled “Motivational Monday”, with a 2-3 minute video and a transcribed text for motivation weekly across the agency for the entire staff to receive in each staff member's emails. God has reminded us throughout this process that we must keep our hope anchored in the passion and the purpose He called us to do to touch and impact the lives of His people.

In the beginning of March, 2026, the Culture Coach has been assigned monthly workshops to teach and encourage the Compassion Navigators on workshops that are supportive of their role in working at the YWCA. It is important to train, equip and encourage the staff so that best practices are used for professional employees are used to serve God’s people.

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP STAFF ROSTER OF THE YWCA OF GREATER CLEVELAND

YWCA Leadership Empowerment Sessions

Tuesday, July 7, 2025, through Tuesday, August 19, 2025 11:30a-1:30p

Facilitator(s):

Denise Coats, HR Director

Candace Price, HR Generalist

Rev. Denise Cunningham Doggett, Culture Coach, Doctoral Student of United Theological Seminary

Participants:

Helen Forbes Fields, President & CEO	Denise Coats, HR Director
Dr. Adriennie Hatten, EVP Programs	Vacant Position, Manager Shelter Operations
Kathy Harris, Clinical Director	Rita Nickerson, Shelter Compliance Manager
Lisa Fuentes, Finance Director	Rajah Baylor, Food Service Supervisor
Kim St. John Stevenson, Advancement Director	Shakenya Harris, Front Desk Supervisor CWH
Nicole Evans, AVP Operations	Kenya Smith Ewart, Front Desk Supervisor IP
Donna Bolton, Clinical Support	Property Manager (vacant)
Doris Chatman, Data Manager	Vacant Position, 1st shift Supervisor
Jessica Gue, Interim ELC Director	Vacant Position, 2nd shift Supervisor
PSH Clinical Manager (vacant)	Shelly Johnson, 3rd shift Supervisor

Learning Objectives

Participants should depart the session with an understanding of:

I. YWCA: Greater Cleveland Mission, Vision, Values, Strategic Plan

II. Know who are the members of YWCA GC Leadership Team

III. Define the One Culture initiative

Training Agenda

11:30a - 11:35a	**Where are we going?** Welcome and Overview	Denise Coats
11:40a - 12:00p	**All Aboard** New Employee Orientation	Candace Price
12:05p - 12:25p	**Who's Going?** Meet YWCA Leadership Team	Denise Coats HR Team
12:30p – 1:30 pm	**We're all in this together** One Culture explained / Wellness (Voluntary)	Denise Coats Denise Cunningham Doggett
	Disembark Wrap up & Q&A	

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP INVITE TO REGISTER FOR PROJECT HOPE

Get Ready this Summer as the HR Team hosts the Leadership Team on a Fantastic Voyage throughout the summer 2025 as we launch into the deep in discovering more about the new One Culture at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. We need all hands to be on deck as we navigate this new venture for the participants of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

You are encouraged to RSVP your attendance today as we set sail for our new Summer Series beginning on Tuesday, July 8, 2025 at 10:30 am. – 1:00 pm at the YWCA, Administration Building at 4910 Prospect Avenue. All of the Leadership Team are invited to attend.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

The Human Resource Team
Denise Coats, HR Director
Candace Price, HR Generalist
Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett, Culture Coach

APPENDIX C

SYLLABUS FOR EMPOWERMENT SESSIONS

YWCA Leadership Team Empowerment Sessions

Tuesday, July 8, 2025 (40 Minute Session) Port of Call: Nassau. Bahamas

Module #1- Foundation of Learning to Work Better Together

- Questionnaire to the participants in the Focus Group
- Need Volunteer Consent Forms Signed by Group
- Starfish Devotional: "You Make the Difference"
- Devotional Reading from "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rich Warren
- Discovering your "Why" for the work that you do
- Leadership Team Bulder: Making Waves for the Team

Tuesday, July 22, 2025 (40 Minute Session) Port of Call: Cammon Islands

Module #2, Historical Foundation – Civil Rights Era

- Concentration on Social Justice
- Tribute to Dr. Dorothy I. Height and the Civil Rights Movement
- Discussion of what current issues are affecting us today
- Activity: Create a Protest Sign and What Would It Say Today?

Tuesday, August 5, 2025 (40 Minute Session) Port of Call: Hawaiian Islands

Module #3, Firm Foundation: Servant Leadership

- Dr. King raised the question; how do we serve?
- In turbulent times what allows you to be anchored in the work that we do at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?
- Activity: Anchor Activity
- Tropical Treat for the Leadership Team

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 (40 Minute Session) Port of Call: Big Island, Hawaii

Interdisciplinary Foundation - Stress Reduction

- **Final Questionnaire with the same questions that were asked in the pre-survey**
- Iron Sharpen Iron
- Review selfcare
- Closing Evaluation Review
- Thankful to all staff participants of the Leadership Team
- Volunteers: Cerena Mangum and Speak Life Ministries Team
- Dress for Tropical Success - Photo Shoot on Cruise Ship with Final Celebration

August 19, 2025

Last Session: One on one interviews regarding development of the Leadership Team

APPENDIX D

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-Questionnaire for Project Hope for the YWCA Leadership Team

July 8, 2025

1. How long have you been working for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?
2. What position do you hold at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?
3. What is your "Y" for working on the Leadership Team?
4. Do you feel a spiritual connection to what you do at the YWCA?
5. What do you love, love, love about your job?
6. What is challenging about the work that you provide leadership to?
7. Are you a team player? What could you do to improve the support of the Leadership Team?
8. How do you deal with conflict when working with others on the Leadership team?
9. Do you find this workshop helpful to you as a Summer Workshop? Why, or why not?
10. What would be helpful to you for future training for the Leadership Team?

APPENDIX E

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

Post-Questionnaire for Project Hope for the YWCA Leadership Team

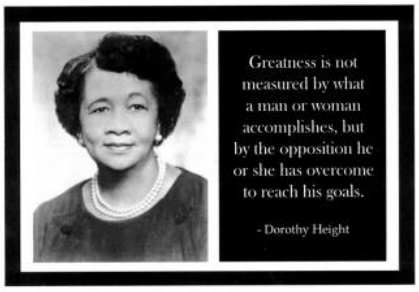
August 19, 2025

1. How long have you been working for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?
2. What position do you hold at the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?
3. What is your "Y" for working on the Leadership Team?
4. Do you feel a spiritual connection to what you do at the YWCA?
5. What do you love, love, love about your job?
6. What is challenging about the work that you provide leadership to?
7. Are you a team player? What could you do to improve the support of the Leadership Team?
8. How do you deal with conflict when working with others on the Leadership team?
9. Do you find this workshop helpful to you as a Summer Workshop? Why, or why not?
10. What would be helpful to you for future training for the Leadership Team?
11. Do you believe that the Empowerment Sessions were helpful training to you? And would you take these workshops again?
12. What kinds of workshops would you recommend for more Empowerment Sessions?

APPENDIX F

NEWS ARTICLE: TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY HEIGHT OF THE YWCA

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Greater Cleveland


Greatness is not measured by what a man or woman accomplishes, but by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals.
- Dorothy Height

Celebrating Women – The Life and Legacy of Dorothy Height

March is Women's History Month, commemorating and encouraging the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history. It is celebrated during March in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, corresponding with International Women's Day on March 8, and during October in Canada, corresponding with the celebration of Persons Day on October 18.

This International Women's Day, we celebrate the life and legacy of Dorothy Height, who trailblazed the intersection of gender and race activism within the civil rights movement.

Born in Richmond, Virginia March 24, 1912, Dorothy Irene Height became, for many, an example of a life of service. In high school, she began her activism, participating in anti-lynching campaigns of the 1920s. After attending New York University and Columbia University, Height became a social worker and transformed that career into one as an activist for civil and women's rights.

Early Life

Growing up Dorothy excelled as a student, which enabled her to receive a scholarship to attend college. In 1929, she was admitted to Barnard College but was told she had to delay her entrance a year because the school had met its annual quota of two

African American students. Instead, Dorothy went on to graduate from New York University where she received a bachelor's in education and master's in psychology.

Racial Justice Leader at YWCA

"We have to improve life, not just for those who have the most skills and those who know how to manipulate the system. But also for and with those who often have so much to give but never get the opportunity." – Dorothy Height

After her first job as a social worker in Harlem, Dorothy began working at YWCA Harlem in 1937. Over the next 40 years, she rose high in YW's national organization. During her tenure she influenced YWCA to become actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement by serving as a sponsoring agency of the 1963 March on Washington. She pushed to end YWCA's practice of separate conferences — one for Black leaders and another for Whites — and traveled the country helping local chapters implement the organization's interracial charter. In 1965, she was appointed as the National Director of the Center for Racial Justice and tirelessly worked within YWCA to desegregate all levels of the organization.

Dorothy was a 25-year-old assistant director at the YWCA in Harlem when then First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and National Council of Negro Women founder Mary McLeod Bethune paid a visit. Dorothy was assigned the job of greeting and escorting the first lady, but a conversation with Mary, the daughter of formerly enslaved people, altered the course of Dorothy's life. She was inspired to begin working with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Mary's significant influence on Dorothy was evident throughout her life, and the two maintained a life-long friendship.

Civil Rights Movement

Through the NCNW, Dorothy focused on ending the lynching of African Americans and restructuring the criminal justice system. In 1957, she became the fourth president of the NCNW. As president, she led the group to expand its mission. Her initiatives included training thousands of women — housewives, teachers, office workers, students — to work as community advocates. Back in their own communities, they pushed for better housing, schools and stores.

Though not nearly as well-known as her male contemporaries, Dorothy was a steadfast presence in the Civil Rights Movement. Often the only woman at strategy meetings with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders, she was a determined voice pressing the importance of issues affecting women and children, such as childcare and education.

In 1963, Dorothy, along with other civil rights activists, organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Although she played a role in the march, she was not invited to speak. Originally no women were included on the program at all. Dorothy and Anna Arnold persuaded the other organizers to allow a woman to speak. Despite the apparent gender discrimination in the Civil Rights Movement, Dorothy continued working on the front lines.

For all her efforts during the Civil Rights Movement, Dorothy was awarded and recognized by many organizations. In 1989, she received the Citizens Medal Award from President Ronald Reagan, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1994, and in 2004, Height was honored with the Congressional Gold

Medal. The same year, Dorothy was inducted into the Democracy Hall of Fame International. She also received an estimated 36 honorary degrees.

On April 20th, 2010, Dorothy Height passed away at the age of 98. Her funeral was held at Washington National Cathedral and she was eulogized by President Barack Obama.

"I want to be remembered as someone who used herself and anything she could touch to work for justice and freedom. I want to be remembered as one who tried." – Dorothy Height

APPENDIX G

VIDEO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

VIDEO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett

Doctoral Student, United Theological Seminary

The Hillard-Jones Doctoral Fellows

Doctor of Ministry Intensive Focus Group

Problem Statement:

After the pandemic, the problem with the context of ministry Is the inability of training for new Leadership Team for empowerment to strengthen the values and mission of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

The Hypothesis:

If the Leadership Team and Staff, participate in Empowerments Sessions, then they will be better equipped to strengthen and practice the mission of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland that We Are on A Misson.

Questions:

1. Name of Supervisor and what role has your supervisor played in supporting your seminarian journey?
2. During the 7-week time of the Final Project were the members of the YWCA Leadership Team impacted by the teaching and workshops provided by Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett?
3. Did Rev. Denise Cunningham-Doggett maintain a scholarly approach for spiritual enrichment for the Leadership Team of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland?

4. What professional recommendations would you suggest for her in her last year at United Theological Seminary?
5. Any highlights of the Final Production “Anchored in Hope” for the Leadership Team of YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

APPENDIX H

PROFESSIONAL LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT FROM

DENISE COATS, VP OF ADMINISTRATION

OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE

YWCA OF GREATER CLEVELAND

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great appreciation that I write to highlight the tremendous impact of the Summer 2025 Leadership Empowerment Training Series conducted by Rev. Denise Cunningham Doggett for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland Leadership Team. As the Vice President of Human Resources, I had the privilege of observing the transformation that took place not only in our staff but also in our collective organizational because of this training series.

Module #1 – Empowerment Session: "What is Your Y?"

Rev. Denise began the summer series with an empowerment session titled "What is Your 'Y' for Working at the YWCA?" Drawing from Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," she reminded each leader of the divine purpose connected to their professional calling. The session was grounded in both scripture and motivation, incorporating insights from the book Start with Why by Simon Sinek. This module provided an anchoring space for self-reflection, inspiring each leader to reconnect with their personal mission and passion for service.

The session was described by participants as confirming and inspiring. New leaders shared that the experience affirmed their decision to join the YWCA, while long-standing team members said it reaffirmed their alignment with their life's calling and our organizational mission to eliminate racism and empower women.

Module #2 – Historical Foundation: Honoring Dorothy Height and the Civil Rights Legacy

The second module provided a powerful historical grounding. Rev. Denise paid tribute to Dr. Dorothy Height, a pioneering figure in both the YWCA movement and the broader Civil Rights era. Through reflection on Dr. Height's leadership, the team revisited the foundational question: "What does the YWCA stand for?" This session deepened our leaders' understanding of YWCA's enduring commitment to social justice and advocacy. It reignited a sense of purpose to carry the torch of equity, inclusion, and empowerment in a modern context.

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

Module #3 – Theological Foundation: Liberation Theology and Servant Leadership

The third session explored the principles of Liberation Theology, challenging our leaders to consider how their faith and values shape their professional practice. Rev. Denise guided the team in examining what it means to demonstrate Servant Leadership in the marketplace to lead with humility, compassion, and justice. Team members were encouraged to share their personal testimonies, creating a sacred space of

authenticity and collective growth. The discussions reminded us that leadership at the YWCA is more than administrative it is a spiritual and moral calling to uplift those we serve.

Module #4 – Interdisciplinary Foundation: Trauma-Informed Leadership and Wellness

The final module integrated trauma-informed care, psychology, and wellness, emphasizing the importance of self-care and emotional resilience in leadership. Working within shelter environments and with vulnerable populations presents deep emotional complexities. Despite our wellness initiatives, fatigue can still occur when the weight of the work becomes heavy. Rev. Denise's session was described as restorative, providing tools to reduce stress and maintain balance while continuing to serve with compassion and excellence.

One aspect I personally found deeply transformative was the way Rev. Denise incorporated sound into the wellness journey. At times, there were no words, only silence or the intentional use of music. These moments of sound and stillness carried a healing presence of their own. The music selection and sacred pauses created space for reflection, release and restoration. Many participants shared that these moments allowed them to reconnect and simply breathe. The experience reminded us that wellness is not only about activity but also about the power of stillness and attentive listening.

Overall Impact and Transformation

Across all four modules, the resounding theme was transformation. The training series was described by many as "on time" each session seemed to arrive exactly when it was most needed. Rev. Denise transformed not only the participants but also the physical and emotional space of the training. With creativity and care, she transformed the setting to resemble a cruise ship traveling through various "ports" of learning, symbolizing a journey of professional and personal renewal.

For our leadership team, the experience was truly transformative. Leaders emerged refreshed, grounded, and inspired to continue the vital and often demanding work of the YWCA. Rev. Denise's materials and insights have now been woven into our ongoing leadership development and wellness strategies.

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

I also witnessed transformation in Rev. Denise herself. As she delivered each session, her confidence, presence, and passion visibly deepened. She modeled the very growth and empowerment she was teaching, embodying the message of transformative servant leadership.

In every sense of the word, this training was transformative for our leaders, for Rev. Denise and for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland as a whole. We are grateful for her partnership, vision and spiritual guidance in shaping a leadership culture grounded in empowerment, justice, and care

Sincerely,

Denise Coats

Denise Coats, SHRM-CP
VP People & Culture

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